

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: June 8, 2005

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Alan Endall, Chair
Larry Adams
Nigel Baldwin (excused Item 2)
Robert Barnes (excused Item 2)
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
James Cheng (excused Item 1)
Marta Farevaag
Ronald Lea
Margot Long (excused Item 3)
Edward Smith
Peter Wreglesworth
C.C. Yao (excused Item 1)
James Hancock*

*Mr. Hancock was present for Item 1 only, as a guest Panelist in accordance with the General Policy for Higher Buildings.

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard, Raincoast Ventures

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1133/53 West Georgia Street
2.	6650 Arbutus Street
3.	700 Hamilton Street (CBC)

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Endall called the meeting to order at 4.10 p.m.

1. Address: 1133/53 West Georgia Street
Use: Mixed (550 feet)
Zoning: DD to CD-1
Application Status: Rezoning
Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership
Owner: Holborn Group
Review: Second
Delegation: Mark Whitehead, Arthur Erickson, Mark Thompson, Jane Durante
Staff: Jonathan Barrett, Phil Mondor

James Hancock, Architect, was a guest panelist for the review of this application, in accordance with the General Policy for Higher Buildings.

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, presented this application, referring to the previous Panel review on March 16, 2005. The Panel did not support the application at that time. The Panel generally supported the proposed use and height but had concerns about the density and form which it thought should be reconsidered. There were also questions about whether this smaller mid block site could accommodate the density being sought. Concerns about the design of the tower included a recommendation that the tower form should come down to the ground and that the façade should better identify the project as a “green” building. There was concern about the adequacy of the public access to the rooftop observation area and a recommendation for a stronger public element at grade. A stronger commitment to sustainability was also recommended.

The zoning for this area of the DD does not allow residential use, density is limited to 9.0 FSR and height is limited to 450 ft. This rezoning application, like the earlier submission, seeks approval to include the proposed residential use, to increase density to 16.4 FSR and to allow a height of 550 ft.

The General Policy for Higher Buildings seeks developments which exhibit the highest order of architectural excellence. Other community benefits should also be provided, e.g., being a recipient site for heritage density transfer, provision of cultural or social facilities, or provision of low cost housing. No input from the Panel is required on the community benefits component which is addressed in a separate process. The development should also include activities and uses of community significance (e.g., observation deck or other public amenity). The development should also provide significant public open space on site. A significant sustainability strategy is also required.

- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Mark Whitehead, Architect, introduced the project design team.

Arthur Erickson, Architect, briefly reviewed the concept of the tower form which reflects a hyperbolic paraboloid structure that allows the rigorous view corridor to be maintained. He noted the form takes advantage of existing open space, including the lanes and the roof of the adjacent building, and provides a lively public open space at the ground level and a glass covered “palm court” which allows chairs and tables to spill out onto the plaza. The lower half of the building contains hotel use, with residential above. This mix allows the

residents to take advantage of the hotel services and facilities. With respect to the façade, Mr. Erickson noted the glazing will alter slightly on each of the three facades to respond to their orientation conditions. The top of the building will contain a stack of solar condensers which provide approximately thirty percent of the hot water requirements for the building. Mark Thompson, Architect, reviewed the geometry of the tower form in greater detail and referred to material samples of the proposed glazing. He noted that opening up the ground floor allowed the tower to be brought down to the ground, which involved major changes to the hotel program. He briefly described the public realm parti, including the mid-block connector.

The Landscape Architect, Jane Durante, reviewed the landscape design. She noted the lane provides the vehicular access to the hotel and will include special paving and a water feature to make it an elegant arrival and provide a buffer at grade for the townhouses. Ms. Durante stressed that the open spaced can be viewed as one or two spaces depending on the functions taking place and the palm court will also function as a winter garden. The third level contains a pool for residents and hotel guests and a children's wading pool. Special fibre optic night lighting is proposed throughout the site. The top of the tower contains sky gardens for the penthouse residents and includes an extensive green roof and green walls for storm water management.

Mr. Thompson noted the drop-off and loading functions have been moved to the eastern end of the site, away from the townhouses. In addition to the diagonal mid block connection, there is a secondary, less public connection through the lobby which allows access from Georgia Street to the rear of the site. Mr. Thompson said they believe that moving the public amenity to the ground level makes it much more accessible than the previous scheme. It is also much larger and more versatile. He stressed they have tried to make sustainability inherent in every aspect of the project, including re-use of materials of the existing structure, structural systems, energy modelling, the building skin and glazing, green roof and water conservation.

The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.

- **Development Planner's Summary:** Mr. Barrett noted the following areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought:
 - Use, particularly whether residential use is appropriate in this location;
 - Density: whether 16.4 FSR can be accommodated comfortably on this site;
 - Built form: how this tower (and as a pair with the adjacent Shangri-la) fits overall in the city; scale and height of the tower and its relationship to the immediate context; response to the view cone and whether this built form appropriately defines West Georgia Street;
 - Overall building character;
 - Landscape: the appropriateness of the materials and the publicness, visibility and definition of the palm court and green court;
 - Sustainability;
 - Overall architectural excellence; whether the design earns the requested height and density which will make it one of the tallest buildings in the city.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - The Panel emphasized the need to carefully consider the exterior skin and envelope of the building (e.g., coordination of vents, spandrel areas, operable window details, etc...) to achieve the simplicity and elegance suggested in the model;
 - Further resolution of the tower base which does not currently exhibit the elegance of the rest of the building, e.g., the hotel lobby and response to the West Georgia streetwall and relationship to the adjacent Terasen building;
 - The need to maintain the transparency and purity of the palm court to achieve the highest level of public access and openness and to ensure the quality of landscape materials;
 - Some suggestions to reconsider public access to the top of the building;
 - A stronger commitment to sustainability is needed, noting this is a unique opportunity to set a new standard particularly in the resolution of the exterior skin of the building.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel offered unanimous support for this application and commended the applicant for a very well considered response to the Panel's previous comments. The proposed solution was recognized as being not so much an evolution but a revolution of the design, which holds great promise for achieving the architectural excellence sought for a building of this stature. It was described as bold, decisive and evocative.

The Panel unanimously supported the proposed uses. The mix of hotel and residential was considered to be very positive. There was one suggestion for more uses or to provide some flexibility in the uses for the long term as a contribution to sustainability, also noting the continuing erosion of the city's stock of commercial space in the downtown.

The Panel unanimously supported the proposed density which it thought was handled very well and accommodated with ease on the site.

The proposed height and scale of the tower were also strongly supported. It is very dramatic and works well with the adjacent Shangri-la tower. Some Panel members suggested it could be the same height as the Shangri-la and an observation was made that creating a twinning of the towers as a gateway would be a relevant statement for this location.

The Panel enthusiastically endorsed the revised landscape plan and the assembly of all the public open space at ground level. It was thought to be a significant public contribution. The Panel considered the diagonal connection through the site to be well placed and well handled. Panel members described the proposed palm court as beautiful and delightful.

The overall character of the landscape was strongly supported and its starkness and elegance was thought to work very well. However, it was stressed that the success of the public spaces will depend on careful attention being given to the materials in terms of their richness and durability. The ideas presented on the proposed lighting were supported and it was agreed that considering lighting at this early stage is important and appropriate.

Questions were raised about maintaining the publicness of the palm court in the long term, with a recommendation to ensure it is not easily compromised by the types of services it incorporates. It was stressed that it is important to make all members of the public feel

welcome and comfortable in the space and that services such as public washrooms be included in the negotiations with the hotel operator. Movable chairs should also be provided. Noting that more and more public open spaces are being created in the downtown, one Panel member also recommended that both the City and the development community give greater consideration to how these spaces work so that the programming ensures they remain as welcoming as possible for the general public.

Some concerns were expressed by one Panel member about the water wall feature at the lane, in particular how it will be experienced in winter months. There was also a concern about the sustainability aspects of this feature and a recommendation to explore opportunities to recycle water and avoid heavy use of energy and chemicals to keep it functioning. Incorporating a green component at the lane and integrating it with the water feature was also recommended.

There was a suggestion to consider a triple row of trees to create a stronger triangular expression.

One Panel member regretted the loss of public access to the roof, noting there are few opportunities in the downtown for the public to get to the top of buildings to enjoy the views.

The Panel liked the way the building addresses West Georgia Street while also successfully responding the view cone restriction. The project's contribution to the sequence of green courts along Georgia Street was also recognized.

The Panel had a number of concerns about the building skin and questioned whether the transparency presented in the model can be achieved. In the elevational studies that will be necessary in the next stage of the design the applicant was urged to carefully consider such things as staggered columns, spandrel glass, mullions, and vents, all of which will have an impact on the appearance of the building. There was a suggestion to consider a more opaque building with a patterning of transparency where it can be controlled. There was also a suggestion that the choice of glazing is somewhat ordinary and could be improved upon.

The Panel found the base of the building on West Georgia Street and its relationship to the neighbouring Terasen building to be the weakest part of the project. It was recommended that the tower visibly come to the ground on Georgia Street, to consider pulling the base back somewhat and give the whole site more of the vocabulary of the palm court and tower. It was acknowledged that this is still at the rezoning stage but in general it was thought that the base is not as elegant as the tower and needs further design development. One Panel member questioned extending the expression of the Terasen building and thought the lower floors should be devoted to creating a grand lobby rather than the meeting rooms shown.

Another area of concern for the Panel related to sustainability and the applicant was urged to consider the 75 - 100 year life cycle of the building. One Panel member suggested increasing the height of the tower in order to put more resources into the skin of the building, noting this building could be a real masterpiece for Vancouver and make a significant contribution to the city as a destination for sustainability tourism. It was suggested there is an opportunity to do something much more special than single skin glass which is very difficult to treat from an operational point of view. There is also potential for generating natural ventilation. Involving the federal government in a sustainability pilot project for the building might also be explored. Several Panel members were not satisfied with the applicant's proposal to *strive* for a high level of sustainability and urged that achieving at least LEED silver should be a requirement. The Panel acknowledged the applicant is making the right gestures and the project has a much more integral response to sustainability than previously, however, it was thought that it can be pushed further.

With respect to the proposed solar tubes on the roof, a comment was made that it is unfortunate the public will be unable to see them because they are very interesting and quite beautiful. It was recommended to explore a way for the public to be able to view this contribution to the building's sustainability.

The Panel was unanimous in the opinion that the building achieves, or has the potential to achieve, architectural excellence. A comment was made that the project has an apparent simplicity but with a deceptive complexity which makes it very interesting architecturally. Its conception is quite unique and dynamic in the way it responds to the two city grids. It was stressed, however, that the level of excellence must be carried through in the detailed design.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Whitehead thanked the Panel for its comments and expressed appreciation for the recognition of the efforts made to respond to the earlier concerns. He assured the Panel that the next stage of design development will be approached with the same level of enthusiasm.

2. Address:	6650 Arbutus Street
Use:	Residential (2.5 storeys, 28 units)
Zoning:	RS-5 to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	Polygon Development Ltd.
Owner:	Providence Health Care Society
Review:	First
Delegation:	Nigel Baldwin, Andrew Rosen, Robert Barnes
Staff:	Joanne Baxter, Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** Joanne Baxter, Rezoning Planner, presented this application to rezone the site at the southeast corner of West 49th Avenue and Arbutus Street. The site is currently zoned RS-5 and the application is to permit a medium density residential development. She briefly described the site and its immediate zoning context, noting the site is a triangular shaped property bounded on the west by Arbutus Street and on the east by the CP transportation corridor, beyond which is East Boulevard. The site is currently occupied by St. Vincent's seniors' extended care facility which is no longer in operation. The site is very well landscaped with many mature trees worthy of retention. It also includes a stone wall around the site perimeter. There is a significant slope to the site, both from north to south and east to west.

This site is within the area is currently undergoing a City Plan Visioning process which is not yet concluded. There is, however, Council policy already in place that is applicable to the site and which allows the rezoning application to be considered, on the basis that the application involves the re-use of a public institutional use.

The proposal is for ground oriented housing in the form of a rowhouse development with integrated garages. 28 rowhouses are proposed, averaging 1,650 sq.ft. in size, with an overall project density of 0.84 FSR. The rowhouses are laid out in an east-west direction and are served by three semi private mews courts which have individual driveway connections off Arbutus Street. The courts are depressed relative to the existing grade so the project reads as a two-storey development from most viewpoints. Parking for the residents is in attached garages and there are three visitor parking spaces. The end units have side-by-side garages and the remainder have tandem parking. Most of the mature trees on the site will be preserved and integrated into the overall scheme, as will the existing stone wall and hedges.

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, focused his comments on the urban design aspects of the scheme and briefly described the intent of the RS-5 zoning. With respect to the form of development, the proposal is for five clusters of three-storey rowhouses with three access points off the street. The units are orientated perpendicular to the street. End units have main entries directly facing Arbutus Street. A 13 - 14 ft. setback is proposed along the street frontage. The adjacent RS-5 house is set back 50 ft. from the street and a 15 ft. setback is proposed between this house and the proposed development. Planning staff recommend increasing this separation by a further 5 ft. to provide a more substantial buffer. The height of the development generally ranges from 31 to 35 ft., rising to 39 ft. at its maximum. The building modules have a horizontal expression with vertical bays every second unit, which are 5 m in width. Materials include brick up to the second level and horizontal cladding above. An inventory of the site's existing trees is requested from

the applicant and the retention of as many of the trees as possible will be sought. Retention of the existing stone wall is also being sought.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- general comments on the form of development, including use, density and height;
- the streetscape including the interface with the public realm on Arbutus Street;
- the edge condition between buildings 5 and 6 and the side yard setback from the adjacent RS-5 house.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Nigel Baldwin, Architect, briefly described the design rationale, noting the severe cross-fall on the site. He said it is intended to preserve as many of the trees as possible and an inventory has already been taken. The stone wall will also be incorporated and is important to the scheme. He stressed that there will be very careful design development of the entries in order to maintain the grades. Mr. Baldwin noted that providing street-facing townhouses on this site would result in the loss of the wall and the trees. Robert Barnes, Landscape Architect, reviewed the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - careful attention should be given to the details of the spaces in the courtyards given the narrow distance between the buildings;
 - consider locating the visitor parking as close as possible to the entrance to minimize vehicular movement through the site;
 - the proposed 15 ft. setback from the adjacent RS-5 house is supported and should only be increased if necessary for the trees to be retained.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this rezoning application and found it to be a well thought-out scheme on a complex site. The Panel strongly supported the retention of the existing trees on the site and the stone wall.

The use was strongly supported. The Panel considered the rowhouses to be a good contribution to the mix of housing in the area.

The Panel considered it to be a clear, straightforward layout that is complimentary to the neighbourhood. Orienting the narrow ends to the street contributes to maintaining views across the site and sets up a nice rhythm and scale along the street. The interface with Arbutus Street was thought to be very well handled and locating the rowhouses on end to the street gives the appearance of single family massing. As well, the roof massing further breaks down the impact of the buildings and their length from end to end.

The Panel had no concerns about the proposed density and it was noted that it clearly has the appearance of a two-storey development, in keeping with the adjacent streetscape. The height was also supported and considered to be acceptable even if it does exceed the discretionary maximum height permitted in the RS-5 zone. One Panel member suggested the only element that might be reconsidered would be the gable ends which appear somewhat small for the size of the development.

The Panel unanimously supported the easterly side yard separation as proposed at 15 ft. and saw no necessity to increase it, noting there is little impact on the neighbouring house which is unlikely to remain for the long term in any event. The Panel would support increasing the setback only if required to ensure the health of valuable trees in this location.

Preservation of the corner landscape node was supported. There was a suggestion that there is an opportunity for the developer to turn over this piece to public use, noting it is not an essential component of the project itself but would be a nice gesture to consider for the neighbourhood.

The Panel liked the autocourts which they considered will work well provided they are highly detailed. Consideration should also be given to sound attenuation.

3. Address:	700 Hamilton Street (CBC)
DE:	409307
Use:	Mixed-addition
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	Hotson-Bakker-Boniface-Haden
Owner:	Canadian Broadcasting Corp.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Joost Bakker, Peter Arbuckle, Bruce Hemstock, Walter Franci
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (4-6)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this preliminary application for a comprehensive redevelopment of the entire CBC block bounded by West Georgia, Cambie, Robson and Hamilton Streets. As well as revitalization of the existing CBC facilities, the project includes a new residential/retail component in two towers and townhouses to be developed by Concord Pacific. The proposed density is approximately 2.0 FSR for the CBC component and 3.0 FSR for the residential/retail, which is within the 5.0 FSR permitted in the DD zone. The proposed height of the taller tower is 293 ft. The zoning permits a height of 150 ft., which may be relaxed. This site is affected by a view cone which the proposal respects.

Mr. Segal briefly reviewed the applicable guidelines, including the Downtown Design Guidelines, the Library Precinct Guidelines and Georgia Street Public Realm. There is also a study currently underway on downtown historic trails to establish a network of strong pedestrian corridors. This study, although not yet City policy, identifies Hamilton Street as an important pedestrian route.

With respect to the residential component, while some concerns have been raised about developing too much residential use in the downtown, the Planning Department supports residential on this site on the basis that the employment capacity of the site is being maintained with the retention and revitalization of the CBC facilities. The Planning Department welcomes the redevelopment of this block, which represents a "healing" of current conditions, including all its street edges and overall pedestrian amenity. Staff generally support the overall massing configuration with the higher masses on the Robson Street side of the site and lower massing on the Hamilton Street side.

Specific areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought include:

- Overall massing;
- Relaxation of height from the permitted 150 ft. to 293 ft. There will also be a communications antenna on the taller tower which rises 75 ft. above the roof;
- Response to the street edges, including comments on the proposed townhouses and retail use on Hamilton Street, and pedestrian movement through the site;
- Response to Library Square Precinct Guidelines and whether there should be an overt reference to the cornice line of the library;
- Hamilton Street setback and response to the potential Hamilton Street pedestrian corridor;
- Open space, including the Georgia/Hamilton plaza treatment, use and public nature of the upper level internal courtyard and its relationship to the arcade.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Joost Bakker, Architect, explained that the CBC is undergoing a major cultural change with respect to how it engages with the communities it serves and how the news is manufactured to make it as public and accessible as possible. He noted the original metaphor for the CBC building was a "media factory", most of which is underground. The current proposal intends to open it up to make the news production in particular very visible.

Walter Francl, Architect, briefly reviewed the design rationale, prefacing his comments with presentation of a short 3-D computer animation of the site model. Bruce Hemstock, Landscape Architect, reviewed the public realm aspects of the scheme, and the design team responded to questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - The Panel had concerns about how all four street edges are being addressed and handled in detail and recommended serious reconsideration of the mid-block raised pedestrian arcade;
 - Recommendation to relocate the density occupying the townhouses on Hamilton Street in favour of providing more active retail oriented uses and/or more porosity to the Hamilton Street frontage to allow visibility and/or access up to the interior courtyard;
 - Recommendation for design development to the Georgia/Hamilton plaza to ensure more active uses are located at this prominent corner including maintaining a strong presence for the CBC as an institution, noting its relationship to adjacent institutional uses (Library, Post Office, Queen Elizabeth Theatre);
 - A more serious commitment to sustainable design is warranted given the mixed uses of the overall development, e.g. consideration should be given to potential shared energy use.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel did not support this application and had a number of concerns about the ground plane treatment and the relationships to the street edges.

The basic massing on the site and the height of the towers was supported, with some suggestions for design development to achieve a better relationship between the taller tower and the CBC building - either greater separation or more integration. There were no concerns about the separation between the two towers. A comment was made that it is not clear how the new relates to the old and how the curvilinear form chosen relates to the CBC "bunker".

The Panel did not believe the Library Square Precinct guidelines should be applied to this site, seeing no necessity to reference the library cornice line or to increase the setback on Hamilton Street.

There were concerns raised about the circuitous mid-block pedestrian route through the site which the Panel did not believe would be successful as designed, although it could work for internal circulation or a secondary route. Further, it was suggested that if such a route was successful there is a danger that it would suck the life out of the surrounding streets, particularly Hamilton Street. The Panel generally questioned whether the interface aspirations indicated for the site would be achievable over such a large area and frontage.

The Panel was strongly opposed to the townhouses on Hamilton Street which are very much an anomaly in this area. Residential use on Hamilton Street was thought to be quite inappropriate in this block which, together with the library, Revenue Canada, the Queen Elizabeth Theatre

and the Post Office, is devoted to institutional uses. It was thought the townhouses on the plaza could work. It was suggested that the density from the Hamilton Street townhouses might be absorbed into the lower residential tower, possibly making it more of a slab building.

Concerns were also expressed about the disjointed retail spaces on the site, particularly the two isolated points along Hamilton Street. There were some suggestions to continue the retail along the length of Hamilton Street. The Panel did not support a 20 ft. setback on Hamilton Street, but did believe the Hamilton streetscape needed much more work. Other suggestions were to open up the courtyard to the street on Hamilton, providing a good rhythm of studio-main entrance-retail-courtyard and residential towers and a good response to the very solid massing across the street. One Panel member was concerned that the sense of the CBC building as an important institution is being lost on Hamilton Street.

The Panel was disappointed with the lack of information provided on sustainability, noting that mixed use developments such as this offer excellent opportunities for long term energy conservation. This potential must, however, be incorporated in the very early stages of the design rather than later.

There were recommendations to reconsider the program for the main news studio on Georgia Street to bring it to the corner of Georgia and Hamilton where it will be more visible, especially at night. One Panel member questioned whether the description of the Georgia Street façade as a lantern and animated space was being delivered in this scheme.

Greater animation was recommended for Robson Street which currently seems dominated by the residential above the retail. The Panel also questioned the location of the grand stair which seems to disrupt the Robson frontage and limit retail opportunities. It was thought the stair would be unused and unsuccessful.

With respect to the CBC building, there was a comment that there appears to be no consideration given to its front door, with no improvement to its current fortress-like nature. A comment was also made that while the CBC is not a beautiful building, it is of its time and this should be recognized by providing a gap or glazing so that it can stand proud on the Cambie Street façade.

In general, the Panel was excited by the potential for urban mending of this block but agreed that much more work is needed to make it successful. It was acknowledged that this scheme does represent an improvement over what exists now on all four streets, but it was thought that they could be made to improved upon much more. It was noted that little effort seems to have gone into improving Cambie Street. There was a suggestion that it might have been beneficial for the Panel to have reviewed this proposal in a workshop in order to address the basic principles.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bakker said he appreciated the input of "fresh eyes" on the project. He said he hoped there was recognition that it is a very complex development which has the challenge of finding a balance between what works for the transformation of the CBC from a functional perspective while achieving a successful residential development. He stressed that designing newsrooms is far from simple but they will give it further consideration as the project evolves. He briefly reiterated the rationale for the pedestrian connection and noted how pedestrian routes in general are evolving in the downtown with the rapid development that is occurring. Finally, Mr. Bakker stressed that, apart from the residential towers, the project involves building on top of existing operating building and, because of its height, views through the site are virtually unachievable. Mr. Francl also thanked the Panel for its comments.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8.30 p.m.