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**URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES**

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**DATE:** June 13, 2001

**TIME:** 4.00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Walter Francl, Chair  
Tom Bunting (present for part of Item 1 only)  
Jeffrey Corbett  
Lance Berelowitz  
Gerry Eckford  
Alan Endall  
Bruce Hemstock  
Richard Henry  
Joseph Hruda (Item 2 only)  
Jack Lutsky  
Maurice Pez  
Sorin Tatomir (Items 2 and 3 only)

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	Northeast False Creek - WORKSHOP
2.	1010 Richards Street
3.	3451 Porter Street

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1. Address:	Northeast False Creek - WORKSHOP
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	CD-1, DD, BCPED
Application Status:	ODP Amendment
Architect:	James Cheng, Busby & Assoc.
Owner:	Concord Pacific
Delegation:	Matt Meehan, James Cheng, Tracey Short, Janis Ostling
Review:	Third
Staff:	Michael Gordon, Ralph Segal

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*Workshop only - no vote taken*

- **Introduction:** This was the Panel's third review of this scheme, having seen it twice previously in workshops in June and July, 2000. Senior Planner, Michael Gordon, explained that key directions and objectives have now been identified for this project, providing an overall framework from an urban design, land use and development perspective as well as infrastructure, amenities and other issues for the area. As well, more detailed planning has been done in one area in particular, the Gateway Plaza at the northern foot of the Cambie bridge. Mr. Gordon noted this has been a joint exercise involving Concord Pacific and Pavco and their respective design teams. Other groups have also been involved, including Orca Bay, Plaza of Nations and Central Steam Heat. The plan, together with a set of Official Development Plan amendments will be going forward to Council in July. Thereafter, it is expected a number of rezoning applications will be made, including the recent Costco proposal. Mr. Gordon briefly reviewed the urban design objectives for the area. The intent is for the Urban Design Panel, and ultimately, Council, to consider an overall urban design and amenity framework for the whole Northeast False Creek area.

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

- the overall land use pattern;
- some of the key urban design moves in terms of pedestrian connections and views down to the water;
- the creation of the Cambie gateway plaza including the configuration of buildings;
- the overall scale, form of development and how this scheme knits this part of the downtown with the rest of the city.

Ralph Segal, Senior Development Planner, identified additional areas for the Panel to consider:

- the 5EF block which is being promoted as a choice of use area, noting the desire to retain a degree of flexibility;
- the under-bridge areas;
- comments on the fairly specific building forms that are now emerging.

Panel members, staff and the proponents then assembled around the model for a general discussion and question period.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel enthusiastically supported this proposal. It was thought to be taking a very positive direction and going a long way to normalise aspects of the urban fabric and the city grid in this area. It will vastly improve what is currently a very pedestrian unfriendly part of the city. The Panel also acknowledged the complexity of the project and the considerable effort that has gone into the proposal by both staff and the proponents.

The Panel found the Cambie plaza to be a very positive aspect of the proposal. Panel members were in favour of a strong streetwall for the buildings that define the plaza, with buildings as tall and large as possible next to the off-ramp. The Panel preferred the scale of the commercial option for the plaza.

It was noted by one Panel member that it very much mirrors what is anticipated to occur on the west side of BC Place. Another comment was that it will be important to get some uses around the gateway plaza that will ensure there are people there at all times of the day rather than just during office hours.

A comment was made that a more powerful tool will be design guidelines that control and enhance the form of development as opposed to the actual uses within the development, particularly with regard to the gateway plaza. It is the form of the development that will help make or break that space rather than the uses because it is not a major public destination. At some time in the future, if the stairs are built to connect to BC Place and a new Skytrain station added in the vicinity, it will truly become a powerful gateway to the city.

With respect to the overall land use patterns, the choice of use option was strongly supported by the Panel. It affords the ability to progressively react to changing market and social conditions as well as to the changing fabric of the city. Flexible zoning can accommodate all these changes. One Panel member also suggested flexible zoning be considered at a detailed level, noting the time it has taken for some of the retail uses along Pacific Boulevard to become viable. The Panel supported the proposed density swap between the east and west sites, noting in puts the right kind of uses where they should be and doesn't result in any unfortunate consequences with respect to the building masses.

The Panel thought the pedestrian connections were good and a vast improvement over what exists now. Some members suggested they could be stronger, noting this is a fairly dominant automobile environment that needs mitigating. One Panel member thought that expecting people to walk five blocks was unrealistic in our climate, particularly for the disabled. The bus connection should be much closer. As well, a two-way system on Pacific Boulevard should only be considered if it does not impact on pedestrians. The knitting together of the pedestrian connections from the downtown and the water was thought to be a big step forward. One Panel member thought the Abbott Street connection was equally important to make a link with the Downtown Eastside and International Village. Another recommendation was to give as much consideration to the Georgia connections as has been done on Smithe. Georgia will be much more difficult to deal with but it is also a strong arterial.

Some Panel members had concerns about the entry to BC Place which seems very constricted and more like a secondary entrance. The reconfiguration of the front door provides a good opportunity to integrate with Plaza of Nations with BC Place. One Panel member suggested a vertical icon to identify the front entrance.

The Panel was encouraged by the attempt to address the underbridge areas. It was agreed this aspect will be very challenging to deal with. A comment was made that the key will be to find something that properly animates that space and ensures it is safe and attractive. One Panel member cautioned not to be have too unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved, given the constraints with respect to servicing the bridge structure, and a recommendation was made to work with Engineering with respect to their maintenance requirements.

One Panel member was encouraged by the suggestion that the Terry Fox memorial might be relocated.

A comment was made that it will be in the details where this project comes to fruition and works. As well, the Panel looks forward to the next phase, dealing with the other side of BC Place stadium.

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2. Address:	1010 Richards Street
DA:	405778
Use:	Mixed/Residential (22 storeys)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	Polygon Development 93 Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	James Hancock, Chris Phillips, Rene Rose
Staff:	Eric Fiss, Ralph Segal

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### EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (3-7)

- Introduction:** Development Planner, Eric Fiss, presented this application, noting the focus should be on use, form and density for a preliminary submission. The application proposes 182 rental units in a 22-storey tower. Proposed density is 5.0 FSR plus 0.5 FSR of transferred heritage density (approx. 10,500 sq.ft.), for a total of 115,500 sq.ft. The site meets the minimum requirements in terms of area and frontage for the proposed FSR. The height of the tower, at 205 ft., is well within the maximum allowable 300 ft. The tower is not located within any established view corridor. Guidelines for this area envisage tall, slim towers to maximize views and minimize overshadowing. The 89.5 ft. width of the tower is just below the maximum recommended 90 ft., and the depth of 77 ft. is close to the maximum recommended 80 ft. Typically, a floorplate of about 75 ft. x 75 ft. is recommended, with considerable articulation in plan. With respect to the townhouses, the guidelines call for a minimum 30 ft. streetwall height. The application proposes 2-storey townhouses at 27 ft. The guidelines also seek streetwall definition along Nelson Street as a pedestrian route to Yaletown. Amenity areas are proposed both along Nelson Street and at the second floor level, opening onto a communal courtyard.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the form of development, specifically with respect to floorplate size, noting the proposed floorplate exceeds what would normally be expected for a site of this size in this location. Comments are also sought on the treatment of the upper storeys, the streetwall expression and treatment of the corner. With respect to use, Mr. Fiss noted the amenity rooms along Nelson Street fail to meet the more active retail uses generally sought in this area. Up to 2,500 sq.ft. retail and service use could be permitted. The key issue is density, and whether the extra 10 percent transferred density can be accommodated on this very small site.

The Senior Development Planner, Ralph Segal, added the Planning Department would also like to see the on-site private open space maximized, so extending the roof deck would be encouraged. Mr. Segal also stressed that the guidelines call for a streetwall height of 30 ft. extending to the lane edge. He briefly reviewed the policy with respect to heritage density transfer, which is that the Development Permit Board may consider an increase in density on any downtown site up to a maximum of 10 percent of the zoned density.

- Applicant's Opening Comments:** James Hancock, Architect, noted the guidelines do provide for an increase in floorplate size to accommodate heritage density transfers. The efficiency of a 5,000 sq.ft. floorplate is very poor and uneconomical for a rental building. As well, the surrounding towers are in the 6,500 sq.ft. range, albeit on larger sites. Mr. Hancock noted there is no other retail use in this block which is the reason for the proposed amenity rooms. Rene Rose, Polygon, added that while the objective is to develop a rental building, the developer wishes to reserve the option to convert it to condominium in the future if market conditions change.

*The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.*

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel thought there were a number of very positive aspects to this proposal but did not support the application because it does not meet the guideline objectives and fails to earn the requested increased density.

The Panel liked the double entrance. The way it addresses both the lane and Richards Street is very positive and provides much needed improvements to the lane.

The Panel did not support the amenity space fronting on Nelson Street. It was felt that some other use, with a public component to it, could easily be accommodated. It was noted it is well separated from the main lobby so could function quite independently and privately from the main building. Panel members encouraged commercial and retail space along Nelson Street. It may not be a vibrant street now but some start must be made otherwise it never will be. One Panel member suggested residential use might be considered on Nelson Street.

Some Panel members had sympathy with the applicant's approach to the floorplate size relative to the efficiency of the building. As well, Panel members found the straightforward building approach to be quite refreshing, noting it is not necessary to have outstanding, articulated buildings on every site. The base of the building, however, needs to be strengthened, particularly along Nelson Street.

In terms of earning the relaxation of the guidelines and the right to purchase additional heritage density, the majority of Panel members found the floorplate too big for this site, notwithstanding the challenge of achieving the economics and efficiencies of the building. In general, it was felt the guidelines must be respected. One Panel member felt that no attempt had been made to seriously address any of the design criteria, i.e., it is not a slim tower and no effort has been made to sculpt the upper storeys. As well, the townhouses appear to be "tacked on" to the tower rather than being continuous and integrated with the tower form. One Panel member thought this site could accommodate the additional density but that this particular proposal was not handling it very well.

It was agreed the rooftop amenity space could be enlarged and that filling in some of the drop-off would not be detrimental to the function within the building.

With respect to the prominence of the corner of Richards and Nelson, the Panel was comfortable with the entry as proposed. The corner entry is not essential and the landscape space on the corner is supportable.

While the Panel did not support the application because it clearly fails to meet the intent of the guidelines, many Panel members were sympathetic to the need for the building to be efficient and affordable. The majority of the Panel had no problem with the architecture of the building. One suggestion was that it may be as simple as taking off the additional 10 percent FSR. The heritage density bonus needs to be earned by contributing to making it a better building.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hancock said he was not surprised by the Panel's comments. He explained they have deliberately understated the building in some ways and intended to focus on the detailing to make it more elegant. Residential use on Nelson Street was not considered because it is a very busy and noisy street. Mr. Hancock agreed there is validity in expanding the second and third floors of the building. With respect to the issue of retail use on Nelson Street, Ms. Rose said they consider Nelson as a very vehicular street as opposed to a pedestrian route. They support the idea of having active uses on the street and the amenity space would be very light and open. Mr. Rose added, they will take another look at strengthening the base of the building.

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3. Address:	3451 Porter Street
DA:	405748
Use:	Residential
Zoning:	C-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Structure
Owner:	3451 Porter Street Development Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Ted Seeberg, David Nicola
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

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### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- Introduction:** The Development Planner, Mary Beth Rondeau, presented this proposal for four townhouse units. The site is not a typical C-2 site on a main arterial road but is a small, triangular site located on Porter Street between Victoria Drive and Victoria Diversion. The site measures approximately 85 ft. x 100 ft. The proposal is all residential and includes surface parking off the lane. Maximum allowable FSR in C-2 is 2.5 FSR residential, 3.0 FSR for mixed use. This proposal is 1.32 FSR. The height of the proposal is within the allowable maximum of 40 ft. The residential use is conditional but is supported by the Planning Department. Council policy (1998) is that C-2 projects should have very good architectural design, use quality exterior materials and be referred to the Urban Design Panel for advice. Generally, staff support this project and believe it is well resolved. The Panel's advice is sought in the following areas:

  - the use of stucco on the facia;
  - overall quality of materials;
  - whether the southeast facade needs greater articulation, given its visibility from Victoria Diversion
  - paving materials on the surface parking.
- Applicant's Opening Comments:** The applicant had nothing to add.

*The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.*

- Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously support this application. Panel members considered it a very nice building and had only minor comments.

With respect to the southeast-facing blank wall, one suggestion was to add an elliptical window.

Regarding the use of stucco, it was noted that past technical problems are being overcome and different methods are now being employed. It was also noted that it is only the edge of the soffit that needs to be addressed. Nevertheless, the applicant was encouraged to employ an envelope specialist.

It was suggested something quite interesting could be done with the driveways at the rear to create a small community space for the building residents.

Overall, the Panel was very impressed with the design. One Panel member commented it illustrates that even in a difficult location with limited budget a really attractive exciting design can be created.

- Applicant's Response:** Ted Seeberg confirmed an envelope consultant will be hired and is required for projects with more than two units.