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**URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES**

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**DATE:** June 2, 1999

**TIME:** 4.00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Committee Room #1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Joseph Hruda (Chair)  
James Cheng  
Paul Grant  
Roger Hughes (present for Item #1 only)  
Sean McEwan  
Keith Ross  
Norman Shearing  
Joe Werner

**REGRETS:** Patricia Campbell  
Sheldon Chandler  
Per Christoffersen  
Gilbert Raynard

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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<b>ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING</b>
1. Rupert and Renfrew Rapid Transit Stations (WORKSHOP)
2. 940 Seymour Street

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| 1. | WORKSHOP:   | Rupert and Renfrew Rapid Transit Stations                   |
|    | Use:        | Transit stations, local station planning and CPTED          |
|    | Zoning:     | RS-1/I-2  |
|    | Architect:  | Baker McGarva Hart Arch.                                    |
|    | Owner:      | Province of B.C.  |
|    | Review:     | First   |
|    | Delegation: | Graham McGarva, Greg Ball, Eric Stedman, Dale Rickard       |
|    | Staff:      | Scot Hein, Mary Beth Rondeau, Michael von Hausen, Jane Bird |
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Jane Bird, Rapid Transit Project Manager, briefly reviewed the background of this project to extend the SkyTrain system. The proposed Vancouver stations in the first phase (Broadway-Lougheed Mall-New Westminster) are at Rupert Street, Renfrew Street and Broadway/Commercial, with a future station provided at Grandview. The City's assumption is that the technology, route and station locations are given. The design phase for the three stations is now underway. While each station will be designed uniquely, Baker McGarva Hart has been retained to design all three stations. The station at Commercial Drive will be the subject of a future meeting. The City has established a team of planners and engineers who are engaged in the planning and design of the stations and the area immediately around the stations (the "station precincts"). The objective is to ensure that the area around the stations complements the stations and to ensure the integration between the stations and surrounding neighbourhood fabric is as seamless as possible.

Scot Hein, Development Planner, noted that, in addition to the design of the two stations, a secondary focus relates to some of the emerging policy work and patterns of anticipated development. Specific areas for the Panel's advice/discussion relate to:

- general design approach, particularly with respect to the contextual fit, noting the emerging high-tech expression in this area;
- ridership comfort and general amenity of the stations including weather protection;
- ridership security;
- station specific commercial opportunities;
- general CPTED observations;
- use, height, and commercial opportunities in the station precinct;
- area-wide public amenity opportunities.

Michael von Hausen reviewed the context of the proposed stations, noting the vision for the Grandview/Boundary Area Plan is a high quality, high tech, campus-oriented park with greenway connections and convenient access to transit. Mary Beth Rondeau addressed the crime and safety issues. She explained that a detailed study is underway to determine the actual crime that is occurring associated with SkyTrain stations. The objective is to design for the sorts of crime that can be expected.

In the question period that followed, Frank Ducote, Senior Planner, advised that live/work use is not being considered for this area.

Members of the design team reviewed the station designs in greater detail.

Following informal discussions with the applicant team and staff, the following points were made by the Panel:



**General Comments:**

- generally, the buildings are looking very interesting, but it is not clear that the designers are solving the overall issue, which is how these stations relate to the context - i.e., the creation of a "sense of place". The Renfrew station is better than Rupert in this respect and has the characteristics that will start the creation a future parti with respect to the overall context;
- congratulate Transit for the commitment to designing each station differently;
- the greenway must be integrated with the station to be a fully integrated urban space;
- asymmetry: both stations have one side facing the railroad tracks. There may be an opportunity to consider the track side as one expression and the urban, street side as another expression to give further character to the station;
- the bus drop-off on both stations is a concern: there should be a pull off for the buses;
- it is crucial to create more of a functional linkage between the bus and SkyTrain systems, noting existing stations are not successful in this regard. Given the major public investment, commuters must be encouraged in every way;
- the designs of the stations will be improved if pedestrian bus drop off areas are incorporated into the station precinct;
- public policy with respect to land use should be carefully considered - more of a mixed use scenario should be considered given the major public investment in the public transit system - the more uses and more people that can be brought into these areas the more successful the transit system will be in the short term;
- with respect to CPTED issues, urge the introduction of active uses and visible transit staff during operating hours;
- bus stops should be located as close as possible to the stations;
- support considering uses other than retail under the guideway;
- the street offset will work better if it is straight and avoids left-over space;
- there is no planning for bicycle parking - this should be emphasized more in the early stages;
- congratulations on the soft shape for the roof, it should be detailed well, and the shape continued to be studied;
- there needs to be an effort to bring some of the lightness of the structure that supports the canopy on the upper level down to the ground to mitigate the scale of the structure of the guideway with respect to pedestrian interface;
- encouraged by the translucency of the roof - encourage the applicant to light it in a way that maintains that translucency from the point of view how it appears as a beacon on the skyline - it is the catalyst for development in this area in the future;

- suggest the more urban it is at the edges the more successful it will be as a people place;
- re land use around the stations, some of the future developments need to be encouraged to reinforce their pedestrian network with respect to connections to the stations;
- the roofs of both stations are very substantial structures, and because users are forced to use one side or the other, it presents a strange proportion of the roof to waiting passengers. The roof may provide an opportunity to identify where the train will stop;
- it is a missed opportunity that the commercial components are not designed as integral parts of the stations;
- the integration of commercial is critical;
- the integration of the bus system is critical. It has not been accommodated sufficiently in either scheme;
- the general approach to the roofs is the right way to go to get some dynamics into the forms of the stations, and the concept of motion is evident;
- the offsetting of the platforms is a good technique and it tends to open the station visually to the street, although it only works well in one direction.

**Renfrew Station:**

- support for the transparency of the Renfrew station;
- dividing the roof into two segments weakens its visual impact;
- the elevations on the Renfrew side are too transparent. More should be done to tie together covered pedestrian pathways along pedestrian desire lines from transit links and future uses;
- the southwest corner is hidden from view;
- the architectural rather than the engineering alignment of 12th Avenue makes a much more successful street in terms of its relationship to the station;
- the small commercial opportunity should be much more strongly integrated and its visibility from the south considered;
- with respect to the barrier along the railway edge, whether something should be provided there that is integrated with the design of the building, i.e., at the ground plane, particularly on the Renfrew Station, whether there needs to be a piece of architecture or landscaping that separates the property footprint from the tracks;
- the geometry of the street is very important and the engineering solutions are a concern; there needs to be some exploration of the character of that space;
- wonder whether the Renfrew station should be on the other side of the street in the new high tech park

where there is opportunity to make it all work together.

**Rupert Station:**

- the farm reference for the Rupert station may not be appropriate;
- support for the enclosing form of the roof; the Rupert design is more successful because it evokes the historical train station form;
- the greenway is not well integrated at the Rupert station;
- the Rupert roof is too large;
- there needs to be a better announcement of the arterial to the street, which may involve bringing the canopy further forward;
- the commercial could work in a very interesting way, providing an entry court to the station;
- regarding the integration of the area planning process and the station design process, there are opportunities, particularly at Rupert Station where the 3-storey public storage building should be re-examined, to tie the station into Broadway.

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2. Address:	940 Seymour Street
DA:	403485
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete after Preliminary
Architect:	Buttjes Arch. Inc.
Owner:	Wall Financial Corp.
Review:	Third
Delegation:	Dirk Buttjes, Robert Emsley, Peter Kreuk
Staff:	Mike Kemble/Ralph Segal

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### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-2)

- **Introduction:** Mike Kemble, Development Planner, introduced this application. The Panel unanimously supported a preliminary submission in October 1998. Since that time, the applicants have revised the proposal to a two-tower scheme, to create a better interface with adjacent developments and for greater flexibility for phasing the project. The proposal is for commercial uses at grade with residential above, and an amenity space at the second floor level opening onto a deck. The two residential towers are 30 and 22 storeys, respectively. A view corridor limits the height to 230 ft. The Panel's comments are sought on the tower massing and location of the towers, the relationship of these towers to adjacent developments; the lower level podium treatments and the lane edge treatment; general materials and colours; and landscaping treatments of the deck areas.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mr. Dirk Buttjes, Architect, noted the earlier scheme was approved in principle by the Development Permit Board in November 1998. They consider the revised proposal to be the same general concept, having the same density and use. The difference is turning the previous low rise component to a high rise, which has a number of advantages. He noted there is potential for a single user for the retail space of approximately 12,000 sq.ft. He briefly described the revised scheme, noting the colour palette is warmer and more earth-toned than previously. Peter Kreuk reviewed the landscape plan, noting there is now much better sun exposure to the landscape space than previously.
- **Panel's Comments:** Following a review of the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel supported this application.

While some Panel members supported the revised two-tower scheme, others questioned whether it is the best solution given the very tight relationships that result on the block. The question was raised as to whether it would have been better to have sought more height at the rezoning stage, and some other solution found for distributing the mass on the site.

The Panel agreed that reconsidering the earlier 6-storey streetwall was a good move.

The treatment at Nelson/Seymour corner was considered somewhat weak, with a suggestion to re-look at the corner element, perhaps bringing the form around the corner.



There was strong support for the landscape and the treatment of the autocourt, and the Panel liked the lane edge treatment. However, with respect to the lane, it was questioned whether the access to the loading bay and the trees closing off the court were defeating the objective of having the autocourt open to the lane. It was suggested this might be reconsidered in favour of making a stronger connection to tie all the landscape elements together and reduce the impression that the lane treatment is leftover planting in front of a blank wall. More attention should be given to making the lane more livable, both at street level and above. The applicant was encouraged to consider more windows on the lane, to provide surveillance and improve livability.

There was a suggestion to consider opening up the courtyard more, visually, to Seymour Street. A couple of windows in the curved wall would provide a good opportunity to view the interior landscaped court from Seymour Street.

With respect to the autocourt, a comment was made that it is unfortunate that 25 percent of this site is devoted to the movement of vehicles rather than something that contributes to the livability of the project.

It was recommended that the applicant consider more open balconies, especially for the smaller units where the ability to step outside is very important.

It was suggested there may be too much paved surface in the linking open spaces at the second level and a recommendation to introduce more greening to provide a better outlook for those looking down on it. It was stressed that there needs to be as much planting as possible in these high density neighbourhoods to provide some visual relief for area residents.

There was disappointment expressed about the need to omit street trees in the bus stop area and encouragement to try to do something to maintain continuity along the street.

Concern was expressed about the materials and colour selection. The colour palette was considered to be a very weak part of the scheme, especially at the base. It was also felt the building would benefit from a better material, or the same material treated differently, particularly along the retail edge. What is referred to as coated concrete looks very much like stucco which will not stand up well to the amount of pedestrian traffic anticipated in this area.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Buttjes noted the autocourt design has had a number of iterations. Ultimately, they believe they have achieved a good balance between high quality finishes and an attractive space while dealing with a high degree of traffic movement, primarily from the lane. The laneway access was shifted to the north, closer to the ramp rather than central to reduce the amount of traffic crossing the court. At the same time, it provided an opportunity to screen the high quality residential character of the courtyard from the loading function to the south. He thanked the Panel for its comments.