
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: June 25, 2003

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Stuart Lyon, Chair
Helen Besharat (present for Items 1 and 2 only)
Bruce Haden
Reena Lazar
Brian Martin (present for Item 3 only)
Ken Terriss
Mark Ostry
Jennifer Marshall
Eva Lee

REGRETS: Jeffrey Corbett
Kim Perry
Sorin Tatomir

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	4899 Valley Drive (1925 West 33rd Avenue)
2.	488 Robson Street
3.	Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre (VCEC)

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| 1. Address: | 4899 Valley Drive (1925 West 33rd Avenue) |
| DA: | 407580 |
| Use: | Residential (129 units) |
| Zoning: | CD-1 |
| Application Status: | Complete |
| Architect: | Gurney Halkier |
| Owner: | Arbutus Gardens Holdings 4 Ltd. |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Cam Halkier, Brian Ellis, Kevin Klippenstein, Bruce Hemstock, Rene Rose |
| Staff: | Eric Fiss |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Eric Fiss, Development Planner, introduced this application. The site is at the southeast corner of the Arbutus Gardens development, now known as Quilchena Park at Valley Drive and West 33rd Avenue. This application is the seventh and final phase of the development. The overall site will contain a maximum of 750 units, 25 percent for families with children. Total FSR is about 1.41. Mr. Fiss briefly reviewed the context and noted the site originally contained seven low rise buildings and significant mature trees. A condition of the rezoning required the trees to be preserved. In this phase there has been a significant change to the approved form of development with a redistribution of the massing. Staff see some advantage to this relocation of the footprints, including some lowering of height within the overall site and improvements to the open space. The current proposal comprises five buildings with a total of 129 units. Access to underground parking is off a consolidated driveway from West 33rd, serving all the buildings at this end of the site. An autocourt provides fire access and drop-off to the middle of the site.

Following a brief description of the proposal, Mr. Fiss noted the areas in which advice of the Panel is sought, namely:

- whether it meets the intent to evolve a precinct engendering the qualities, scale and character inherent in old Shaughnessy, with particular reference to the Craftsman style;
 - the relationship of the massing to the context, with particular attention to the edges between buildings as well as some of the axial relationships and the rhythm of buildings along 33rd Avenue;
 - treatment of the prominent corner at 33rd and Valley Drive;
 - roof forms;
 - relationship to grade and quality of the open space;
 - landscape design.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Cam Halkier, Architect, described the design rationale and the applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application and fully endorsed the proposed reconfiguration of the buildings which gains benefits for the project generally.

The Panel considered the proposal does meet the intent of achieving the old Shaughnessy character, although some Panel members questioned this basic premise of the rezoning and would have preferred a more modern version.

The Panel found the McLure House entry details especially weak and not reflective of typical Shaughnessy entries which have a more formal sense of arrival.

In general, the Panel found the lobbies somewhat mean, and suggestions were made to enlarge the space in front of the elevators and treat them differently to be more welcoming, perhaps reflecting some of the vocabulary of the exterior architecture. A comment was also made that there is a missed opportunity not to have some natural light penetration in the long corridors.

With respect to the corner of 33rd and Valley Drive, the Panel thought more could be done. While a dominant form is not necessary, this corner could be announced more with landscaping. One Panel member questioned the fence around the stand of trees that are being preserved and suggested the corner might be better served by making them part of the streetscape. In general, more diverse landscaping was recommended, and there was also a recommendation to consider larger plant material, particularly at McLure Walk.

Some Panel members found that the project isolates itself somewhat from the rest of the community. A contributing factor could be that the fences and walls are too strongly defining the edges rather than providing accents, which is more typical of Shaughnessy.

The massing relationship between buildings was generally found to be very positive, with the exception of the space between McLure House and McLure Walk which was thought to need further resolution. As well, the end of McLure House needs to be treated in a more positive way.

One Panel member found the colour palette too timid and questioned the use of vinyl siding in this location.

Questions were raised about the location of the amenity, with preference indicated for it to have an outlook at grade and some relationship with the landscape. A comment was made that the pool seems to belong exclusively to Matthews House rather than the general community.

One Panel member thought it was a lost opportunity not to include some of the large roof areas within the units. Some privacy issues were noted, particularly with some of the end units and units 105 & 110 and above.

Some concerns were raised about the use of fake chimneys and suggestions that some other vertical elements would be preferable. Another observation was that the chimney on the side of the building is directly above the underground parking entry, which looks disturbing.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Halkier thanked the Panel for the input. He explained, they are trying to create buildings that are somewhat different and of reasonably high quality. With respect to the roof forms on McLure Walk, he noted they have been steepened and are larger than typical. He agreed

there is the opportunity to do something special at the entries and the inclusion of a recess at the elevators will go a long way to improving the lobbies. He added, the door of each unit will have a large door surround to create a special sense of entry.

2. Address:	488 Robson Street
DA:	407615
Use:	Mixed (16 storeys, 85 units)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	515185 BC Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Martin Bruckner, Peter Kruek, Jim McLean
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application to develop the site at the corner of Robson and Richards Streets in the Downtown District. The immediate context includes the Grand Hotel and Library Square as well as future major development sites in the 500 block Robson and 700 block Richards. A second new downtown park is proposed for the south end of the block, having a 275 ft. frontage on Richards Street. This proposal seeks 5.00 FSR and a cultural bonus of 2.83 FSR for a total of 7.83 FSR. The proposed amenity is for *Artstart*, which offers educators, artists, parents and students a broad range of programs, services and resources to promote arts and creativity among young people. A previous approved application for this site, which also included a cultural amenity for a music library and resource centre, did not proceed. The proposed *Artstart* is supported by the City's Cultural Affairs Department and the density bonus has been endorsed by the Real Estate Department.

The Panel's comments are sought on the following:

- whether the overall form of development can successfully integrate the additional cultural bonus density of 34,000 sq.ft.;
 - the extent to which the cultural amenity is being expressed;
 - whether the Robson Street addressing is appropriate;
 - implications on the potential development of the adjacent site.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Martin Bruckner, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application.

The 34,000 sq.ft. bonus density was strongly supported for the Artstart program and the additional floor area was considered to have been appropriately incorporated into the massing.

The residential entry off Robson Street was fully supported. This is a transitional block of Robson Street which does not have the same necessity for retail continuity as Robson west of Burrard. As well, the entry consumes only a small portion of the streetscape.

The Panel also supported the Artstart entry off Richards Street, with two members preferring to see it closer to Robson. There was considerable commentary, however, about the treatment of the Artstart

entry which was found to be somewhat lacking at this point. In general, it was thought that much more could be done in terms of the potential for display and possibly extending the treatment onto the surfaces of the building at the entry, or on the lane which is currently a rather weak elevation. Several Panel members thought the entry treatment could be bolder and more playful noting the building as a whole is rather conservative. There was also a concern expressed with respect to the canopy at the entrance which seems flimsy and out of place.

The Panel supported the location of the tower. One member would have preferred it to be even closer to Robson. There was a concern expressed that the tower should acknowledge the development potential of the site to the south rather than leaving it for that development to respond. Several Panel members found the tower a bit stubby and would have preferred to see it higher.

The Panel had concerns about the way the tower meets the podium base which it found rather dark and heavy and possibly a little out of context. There is currently little interaction between the tower and the base. A suggestion was made that the third floor might be an opportunity to better integrate the base and the tower. Another concern expressed by several Panel members was the repetitive and generic way the elevations have been treated rather than responding to each orientation.

A concern was expressed about the potential future habitability issues of the south facing units, with a suggestion that it might be worth exploring the opportunity of having more corner glazing on the single unit at the rear (Suite A) where there are currently concrete fins indicated. Another suggestion about the floor plan was to reconsider using the window frontage for washrooms and circulation.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bruckner expressed appreciation for the comments which he said they will work with as the project proceeds.

3. WORKSHOP:	Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre (VCEC)
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	CD-1
Architect:	Downs Archambault
Owner:	City of Vancouver
Review:	First
Delegation:	Ken Grassi (VCCEP), Don Wuori (PWL), Jim Brown (LMN Architects)
Staff:	Ralph Segal, Brent Elliott

- **Introduction:** Brent Elliott, Project Planner, provided some background information on the Burrard Landing site. Guidelines for the original commercial concept for the site were established in 1992. The public objectives were explored by an industry-led task force and a number of potential schemes were conceived. In 2002, the zoning was amended to accommodate the convention centre use and to set out a series of guidelines for the convention centre expansion. These guidelines embody the progress made by the City and the task force in setting out the urban design objectives and providing direction for a superior level of urban design. As well, the guidelines established a direction for establishing a strong sense of place and a special public experience at the waterfront.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, briefly reviewed the history of the site and the organizing principles set out in the design guidelines. One of the main areas of concern identified by staff relates to the anticipation that there is a lower level walkway wrapping around the site, which is not contemplated in this proposal. Staff are concerned about how the complex will look from the water side at its north and easterly edges. The current conceptual program has loading and services at the lower level edges. Staff have a high degree of confidence that a very high order of architecture will be achieved but wish to ensure that the same evolutionary process takes place with respect to the public realm aspects of the proposal.

While funding for the arts complex is not in place at this time, the convention centre developer is required to provide a site that will accommodate the arts complex program. The design and construction of this component is not part of this proposal.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Jim Brown, LMN Architects, presented the design team's vision for this project. He stressed that they fully intend to work through all the issues with the City and ensure they meet the spirit of the guidelines while providing a convention centre of world class status. He reviewed the process involved in arriving at the current stage of the concept. Three design concepts were described: "Island Inlet", "Floating Volumes" and , "Folded Land Forms", with the latter being the preferred concept and the focus of the ensuing discussion. This concept envisions a land form building, starting from Stanley Park and becoming more and more formal along the waterfront and culminating in a building that embraces the landscape. Mr. Brown elaborated on this theme, and the design team and staff responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:** Most Panel members generally supported the applicant's choice of the Folded Land Form theme as being appropriate for this site. The Panel was very appreciative of the opportunity to comment at this very conceptual stage of the design.

The Panel's comments included the following:

Overall Concept:

- worried about the pylons thrown onto it and urge you to stay with the robust concept;
- regarding the first principle idea of the folded form, I think formally and sculpturally there has to be some intention in the folding form from the beginning and then make it work with the exhibition centre;
- my concern about the references to world icons is that it raises expectations, but the budget may not allow those expectations to be realised;
- the “vertical circulation follies” are unnecessary and they dilute the strength of the undulating roof form;
- there is potentially a lot of scope for an environmentally sensitive or green building;
- in some ways the folded land form is the least appropriate for this site because it’s not on land but on water; unless you can pull off the folded land form idea and make it a continuation of the green it makes more sense to go with one of the other two concepts;
- what is missing at the moment is a clear architectural concept for the public space. Ideas about the public space should be at the same level of the ideas presented about the building;
- there is potential in all three concepts. My concern about the folded land form option is that it’s very ambitious to pull off effectively. The first two concepts may have greater opportunity to respond to budget challenges; it would be better to have a slightly less ambitious concept better resolved;
- I don’t see any ideas about great rooms;
- I have a problem with the folded land form concept - it’s more like folded roof form. It’s confusing how it will work. How is it responding to what’s happening underneath? Does it recognize how the tidal waves actually work under there? As part of creating a sense of place I strongly believe that you need to recognize what is actually happening in the space, environmentally;
- consideration needs to be given to the quality of the outdoor spaces in inclement weather, e.g. what is the wind factor?
- there is an escarpment here that isn’t being recognized in any way in the concept;
- the important thing about the concept is how it will be considered by the public. It must be simple and clearly represent the west coast. Make sure the design is not too esoteric but easily understood what might be underneath it and what it might represent.

Waterfront Walkway/Loading Docks:

- this site’s challenge is to make the transition between the city level and the harbourfront walkway, so if the ramp is really interesting it’s not problematic; this is a working port - the whole waterfront doesn’t need to be clean and neat;
- concerned about how it addresses the waterfront edge. In this scheme you begin to get elevated above and disconnected from the water - one of the questions to be resolved is whether that edge is public or not;
- the walkway could terminate on the other side of this complex and bring people up Thurlow Street;
- some concern about the view of this building from the water. I’m not sure the base is going to be all that successful. I think it may need a different kind of base;
- I’m not convinced about the idea of bringing people up all around the building. Maybe you could bring them up within, around or beside the arts complex;
- I don’t have a problem with the idea of the loading dock on the front;
- what’s going to happen at the 3.5 m level which is at the moment loading docks, etc. for the exhibit

- space? I think it needs to be like an industrial level, part of the real working waterfront. Not inaccessible but treated in a much more pragmatic way;
- regarding the walkway, caution that bicyclists will not favour having to climb;
 - regarding the walkway, the whole issue of animation is very problematic on these kind of sites because it's not a through condition, so there is an issue of programming public space that will only get filled up at certain times;
 - I think there might be an opportunity to question the fundamental paradigm of the walkway needing to go completely around the waterfront for the entire length of Vancouver - the waterfront is becoming dull and boring;
 - I completely disagree with the idea of having the walkway on both levels and would like to see some greater exploration of this. There won't be the volume of traffic;
 - there are possibilities in the loading dock idea but I'd actually like to see it a lot more inhabited. Perhaps a chunk of the building could actually drop over the walkway and over the water;
 - I agree we are creating a monotonous waterfront. There is no harm in having maybe one level of animated public open space and allowing the working waterfront to be really evident - it would create a lot more interest and people would be more drawn to it;
 - if the walkway were to terminate at the large plaza it might serve the city better than going around the north and east side and onto the dark side of the building. The west side of Canada Harbour Place is certainly a working environment and there is no reason that the east side of this building can't be similar and may be best suited for the loading and service areas, as the lower levels of Canada Place are;
 - I don't think it's appropriate to have the loading out on the waterfront;
 - animation of the walkway will be a problem if we try to animate too long a strip. You can't bring animation where it doesn't want to be animated on its own;
 - office space might be attractive to buffer the vehicular spaces sandwiched in between. It might be good space for the people being relocated from the air terminals, etc., or private office space.

Roof Plaza:

- I have a real problem with the roof plaza and I don't think you can even contemplate it being above the level of the street - it has to be at or below Thurlow Street;
- it's hard to imagine a roof form like this without some significant public space on top of it. You're missing a huge opportunity - in fact, it might address the issue of not having to have the edge as being public. The whole roof doesn't have to be accessible but to be able to get up onto it would be a great idea;
- I agree that the plaza should have a better relationship to Thurlow Street;
- this project is a huge opportunity for space that has potential for festival programming in the future of the city and the whole region;
- I totally agree that the public plaza probably needs to be at the same level as the streetscape, but I also want to get a sense that the outside of the building isn't completely dominating the interior space;
- question whether Vancouverites are "big plaza people" - we don't need a plaza of this size.

Public Transit/People Movement:

- I don't see any public transit or people movement coming into this site; one of the items in the guidelines was an entrance at the southeast corner and I think that is a more successful way of coming into the site, architecturally and in urban design terms;
- regarding the intersection at the foot of Burrard, between the old convention centre and the new convention centre, at present there seems to be no connection - wonder if there is the possibility of linking the two together;

- agree with the comment about transit and people movement - it is really important to incorporate it and not to leave it to the end;
- I would like to see more than one exit from the parkade because people want to be able to get out quickly; there might be an opportunity to connect the parking to Waterfront Street;
- it is very important that the front entry is very clear;
- the lobby at the lower level is very positive.

Termination of Burrard Street:

- the termination of Burrard Street has not been addressed; it is the natural termination area for the parades and protests that begin at Burrard Bridge. It doesn't have to take away from the view;
- I agree there needs to be a termination at the end of Burrard for parades and protests;
- agree with the comments about the end of Burrard Street. I think it's really challenging because in a sense the natural place for a public plaza is really at the end of Burrard Street.

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