
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: June 26, 2002

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Helen Besharat
Gerry Eckford (present for Items #1 and #2 only)
Richard Henry
Reena Lazar
Stuart Lyon
Kim Perry
Maurice Pez
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss

REGRETS: Jeffrey Corbett
Joseph Hruda

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. "Outstanding Design Recognition Declaration"
2. 370 East Broadway
3. 1988 East 49th Avenue

1. Topic: "Outstanding Design Recognition Declaration"
Architect: Richard Henry
Staff: Jonathan Barrett
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Following the brief discussion at the Urban Design Panel meeting of May 15, 2002, Richard Henry brought forward his suggestion that the Panel convey some kind of recognition to exceptionally well designed projects that come before it.

The intent is that the Panel graphically identify exceptional projects in the early stages, in the hope that such recognition will help applications through the process and encourage favourable consideration to be given to any relaxations that may be necessary to achieve what is being proposed.

In discussion, it was agreed that this recognition would be given very rarely and only after a project receives the unanimous support of the Panel. After a unanimous vote of support, any member may then propose that a project receive this recognition, which must also receive the unanimous support of all members present.

Once a project is identified to receive recognition, a seal (to be prepared by Richard Henry), stating "City of Vancouver Urban Design Panel - Recognition for Outstanding Design" will be applied to the model. The recognition will also be identified in the minutes, ie:

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)



Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, cautioned that there should be no expectation that projects receiving the Panel's special recognition would bypass the City's standard development permitting process. By-laws and Codes would not be relaxed for good design. In discussion, it was agreed that the intent is that favourable consideration be given only where there is discretion for relaxation and, in some instances, where a Text Amendment is sought for by-law relaxations. On this basis, Mr. Barrett confirmed he believed the City would have no concerns with the Panel's proposal.

A memorandum will be sent to the Directors of Planning advising them of this decision.

Street Furniture

A Panel member questioned why the Panel has not been invited to review the submissions for street furniture. The Chair indicated that he has been advised by staff that, since design is 30 percent of the bid and other criteria such as cost and deliverability are major factors in the selection process, it was decided not to have an open forum on the design issues.

Victory Square

It was noted that the Park Board is in the process of redesigning Victory Square. The Panel agreed that this important project should receive the Panel's input, and questioned the procedure for including it on the agenda. It was noted that civic projects are within the Urban Design Panel's mandate.

Jonathan Barrett agreed to contact the Park Board before the Panel makes a formal request to see the proposal.

2. Address:	370 East Broadway
DA: 406733	
Use:	Retail
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Hotson Bakker
Owner:	VSF Dist. No. 39
Review:	First
Delegation:	Byron Aceman, Jeff Philips, Alan Boniface, Edward Leflufy, Sandra Korpan
Staff:	Bob Adair

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-7)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Bob Adair, introduced this proposal for an addition to the Kingsgate Mall at Kingsway and Broadway. The proposed site is currently a surface parking lot at the west end of the mall. The application proposes a two-storey retail building for Staples, with additional parking provided on the roof.

Mr. Adair briefly reviewed the context of this highly visible site, noting that Mount Pleasant is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the city and there are a number of heritage buildings in the vicinity.

The C-3A zone permits an outright density of 1.0 FSR and height of 30 ft. Retail is an outright permitted use. The proposal seeks a density of approximately 1.5 FSR which includes the above grade parking, and minor height relaxations for some of the screening structures, some of which may encroach on City property. A parking relaxation is also being sought, noting the existing mall has fewer parking spaces than required. However, a traffic study indicates that adding a further 40 spaces for the new retail will probably be adequate. The Planning Department strongly supports the proposed use, noting the area is in need of revitalizing. There are, however, a number of urban design issues on this very significant site.

Noting that C-3A projects must earn density above 1.0 FSR (to a maximum of 3.0 FSR), Mr. Adair highlighted the following areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought:

- streetscape along Broadway and Kingsway: whether the Kingsway frontage should be pulled back; comments on the arcade on the north side of the building; and the parking access ramp, noting the guidelines call for recognition of the smaller retail frontages in the area and encourage acknowledgement that brick is a predominant material in the area;
- corner treatment, given the significance of the site and the opportunity for a plaza element at the corner; also the corner of expression in terms of urban design and architectural concepts;
- rooftop parking, noting the new hotel across from 10th Avenue overlooks this site;

In summary, Planning supports the requested use and density and welcomes the impact that this project will have on the viability of the neighbourhood and on Kingsway Mall.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** The applicant team presented the proposal in greater detail and responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel agreed unanimously that rehabilitation of the Kingsgate Mall is a very worthwhile endeavour. The Panel supported the proposed use and density. The majority of Panel members also supported a Staples store in this location, believing it will be economically helpful to the entire Mount Pleasant neighbourhood. However, the Panel had major concerns about the form and massing and was unable to support the proposal.

Given the importance of this site in an historic area with many heritage buildings, most Panel members thought the architecture should reflect some of the heritage aspects of Mount Pleasant. The proposal is not compatible with the surrounding buildings. This does not necessarily mean using brick, but to offer some sense of continuity in the streetscape. The Panel found the gritty industrial language quite foreign to this area.

The Panel found the corner to be the weakest point of the project and generally thought it needed a lot more work. Some recognition of the mall entry needs to be incorporated in the corner. As well, the stepping down several feet below the sidewalk at the corner will make it a very difficult space. Most Panel members thought the corner would be best left simple and open, noting it has historically been open and green. It was not considered it would be detrimental to the retailer.

There were major concerns expressed about the massive corner Staples sign, particularly since the Staples entry is not at the corner itself. There were general concerns about the aggressiveness of the corporate image in this proposal. The Panel thought the project would benefit greatly from serious design development to tone down this aspect of the scheme. The new Future shop on West Broadway was cited as a good example of how it can be done successfully.

In general, the Panel did not believe the existing Kingsgate Mall has been adequately recognized in this scheme, nor is its access expressed anywhere on elevation. The Panel expressed disappointment that little appears to have been done to support the mall. Suggestions were made for Staples to have direct access to the mall, and perhaps to find a way for mall visitors to be able to see up into the Staples store. The mall seems to have been isolated by this project, failing to take advantage of a real opportunity to connect the two together and provide the mall with much needed support.

The Panel supported the requested parking relaxation.

The roof landscaping was found to be somewhat lean. There was a recommendation to consider repeating the screen element and bringing some more green into the area. It was also noted there is no differentiation in the hard surfaces by way of paving patterns to direct pedestrians. Another observation was that the parking stalls are nosed right into the edge of the building, with very little space left for people to walk along the edge of the building and forcing them to walk down the driving lane.

While some Panel members thought the ramp could work in the proposed location, it was agreed to be a difficult place. Suggestions included moving the ramp, even if it sacrifices a few more parking spaces. In general, it was thought that, if the ramp is to remain where it is, it needs a lot more work to be better integrated and screened from the street.

Some Panel members did not believe the arcade to be the right solution for this location. One concern expressed was that, not knowing what will happen to the rest of the mall, it could end up as a small isolated piece of arcade in one style, with something else occurring as the mall develops.

Consistent treatment of the sidewalk edge within the block should be an important consideration. Most Panel members found the narrower sidewalk depth a little difficult but supportable and consistent with the area.

One comment about the overhanging canopies is that they are acceptable provided they do not compromise the trees.

With respect to the 10th Avenue frontage, there were concerns expressed about putting lawn immediately adjacent to a curb with street parking. As well, the blank wall on 10th Avenue may be a target for graffiti.

The Panel acknowledged that this project is an important undertaking, both for the Mount Pleasant community and the city as a whole. While not able to offer its support for the proposal at this time, the Panel was enthusiastic and hopeful that the revitalization of Kingsgate Mall will proceed. The proposed use is strongly supported, but the project needs to take a completely different direction to be more sensitive to its context.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Boniface noted the future impetus of the project is to change the entire mall so that it is no longer internalized. He acknowledged the Panel's comments that the entry is not expressed well but explained the intent is that in the long term it will not be an entry but storefront only.

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3. Address: 1988 East 49th Avenue
DA: 406605
Use: Mixed
Zoning: C-2
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Kingsley K. Lo Architect Inc.
Owner: 637904 BC Ltd.
Review: First
Delegation: Kingsley Lo, Andrew Moolin, Domenico Ranzoni
Staff: Eric Fiss
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Eric Fiss, Development Planner, presented this application for a 4-storey mixed-use development in the C-2 zone, noting Council's 1998 directive that C-2 applications should have very good architectural design, introduce quality materials and be reviewed by the Urban Design Panel.

The site is located on the southwest corner of Victoria and East 49th Avenue and is currently vacant. The proposal contains approximately 5,000 sq.ft. of retail use on the ground floor (0.5 FSR) with 30 residential units above, accessed from a lobby on East 49th Avenue. The residential component has a floor space ratio of approximately 2.38 for a total project density of approximately 2.86 FSR. Maximum permitted density in C-2 is 3.0 FSR (2.5 residential plus 0.5 commercial) although the guidelines indicate that 2.2 FSR for residential is typically the maximum that might be achieved on a corner site. Loading, garbage, recycling and access to parking is from the lane at the rear. The building is below the maximum permitted height of 40 ft. Materials include horizontal vinyl siding, trimmed and bounded with fibre cement boards, cultured stone and concrete block, and aluminum storefront glazing at the retail level. Vinyl awnings at also proposed.

The advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- the appropriateness of density over 2.2 FSR and whether it achieves livable units;
 - architectural quality: form and massing and corner expression, window/wall composition, articulation on both Victoria and 49th as well as the expression facing the lane, and the party wall at the interior property line; use of materials and detailing;
 - landscape design including terraces and balconies.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Kingsley Lo, Architect, described the project in greater detail and responded to questions from the Panel. He noted their proposal for 2.38 residential FSR is below the 2.5 FSR maximum permitted in the zoning by-law. The guideline reference to 2.2 FSR is the average that has been achieved in the zone.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application. There were no concerns about the use and density. There was strong support for the affordable housing this project will provide.
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It was acknowledged that the form and massing is a product of the density. While It offers little articulation this may be offset by the efficiencies. The Panel generally supported the conservative simplicity of the building.

There were, however, a number of concerns expressed about the proposal and some suggestions made for improvement, as follows:

- the building itself seems out of context, and the large wall on the south side seems a little brutal next to the adjacent small retail building;
- the parapet is a somewhat relentless - it would be nice to have a little variation in some places;
- recommend a more robust detailing on the guard rails on the building;
- try to put more emphasis on the corner of East 49th and Victoria;
- do not understand column in the corner -- the corner could have been enclosed rather than being exposed;
- the landscape design is appropriate. Suggesting stepping back a little on Victoria to expose the commercial and retail units more to the street;
- question the livability of the units on the east side where the bedrooms and living rooms have very little exposure to natural light. Suggest open balconies to achieve a better quality of natural light;
- consider converting a couple of units to studios and distributing the floor area to make other units more livable;
- the circulation area at the top floor could benefit from the addition of skylights;
- suggest differentiating the canopy colour from the vinyl siding to provide greater animation;
- pay close attention to detailing of the canopies;
- on the East 49th elevation, reconsider framing the stair with trim in favour of introducing some natural light into the stair;
- too many window sizes - suggest simplifying;
- something needs to be done about the corner: maybe differ the cornice line at the corner or raise it a few inches to express the corner;
- reconsider the terracing at the 4th floor which could create potential weather-proofing problems;
- major concerns about the livability of some of the units; some of the bedrooms at the penthouse level seem peculiarly narrow;
- revisit the proportion of window to stone at the base of the building;

- simplify the building by making it a straight four-storey rather than stepping back the penthouse level;
 - missed opportunity for introducing light into the stairway - it would make a big difference to the building in general;
 - the small canopy on East 49th seems out of character with the rest of the building;
 - concerns about the blank walls on either side of the entrance on East 49th;
 - introducing natural light into the stairway will provide interest from both the inside of the building and from the street;
 - C-2 projects such as this need to have a high standard of detailing as well as good quality materials and particular attention needs to be given to detailing of the proposed hardi panel and cementitious stone;
 - the building looks like a mid-block development, with all the suites looking to the street or the lane and no advantage taken of the corner;
 - missed opportunity not to bring daylight into the end of the corridor with the stair relocated inside.
- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to the stair, Mr. Lo explained that locating it inside results in a longer corridor. He agreed with the Panel's comments about the detailing.