
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: June 3, 2009

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Council Chamber, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Martin Nielsen, Chair
Richard Henry
Bruce Haden
Oliver Lang
Maurice Pez
Gerry Eckford
Jane Durante (Item #1 only)
Douglas Watts
Vladimir Mikler (Excused Item #1)
David Godin

REGRETS:
Mark Ostry
Steve McFarlane

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	2665 Renfrew Street
2.	1790 Beach Avenue (English Bay Bistro)

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Nielsen called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address:	2665 Renfrew Street
DE:	N/A
Description:	Increase office use component and height to enable a phased development of office/retail uses in three buildings.
Zoning:	I-2
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership
Owner:	Pacific Capital Real Estate
Review:	Second (first was non-support)
Delegation:	Mark Thompson, Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership Chris Sterry, PWL Partnership Representing owner
Staff:	Allison Higginson/Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-1)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Development Planner, introduced the proposal which is being seen by the Panel for the second time. The site is bounded by Renfrew Street, Kaslo Street, East 12th Avenue and Hebb lane. The site was formerly the Real Canadian Wholesale Club and is currently used by Pattison Signs. The site will soon include the Art Institute of Vancouver. Mr. Black described the context for the area noting the Renfrew SkyTrain station and guideway to the south. Mr. Black stated that normally the rezoning planner will also give a presentation but in this case the Panel had already supported the use, density and heights being proposed. The proposal is for a mixed-use development to include office, retail and a vocational school. The applicant has revised the design since the last review and Mr. Black noted the changes. The revised plans in Phase 2 include lowering the building by three stories and moving it south to provide for more open space. Phase 3 (now Phase 4) is reduced by two stories (from 9 to 7) and moved further west by five feet but will still keep a twelve foot setback from Kaslo Street. The Phase 4 (now 3) floorplate is wider to provide more open space to the south and Phase 5 (new) to accommodate future density by replacing the A1 building. The north-south truck route will be removed in the final phase.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

1. Relationship to nearby residential sites;
2. Distribution of massing across the site;
3. Urban design at the plaza level, including landscape design and the interface between pedestrian and vehicles.

Mr. Black took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Mark Thompson, Architect, further described the changes to the proposal. He said they had responded to the four issues that were raised by the Panel last time: integration with the Arts Institute building, better distribution of massing, increase quality of the urban open space, pedestrian vehicular access and the internal circulation. Mr. Thompson then went into greater detail describing the changes.

Chris Sterry, Landscape Architect, described the updated landscape plans noting that in the previous presentation there wasn't enough open space that was pedestrian friendly. The space has now been widened and the surface parking has been eliminated which allows for a landscape treatment that will help to knit together the existing building with the proposed buildings. One of the challenges with the larger open space was its elevation one storey above street level and that access to it was problematic. Moving the massing of the buildings has created much larger and useable outdoor spaces. The green elements have been put on the north side of the space to create places for people to sit with planting behind them facing south. Paving bands with bollards or perhaps interpretive elements that are sort of a processional in the landscape are planned to help lead people through the space. The centre piece of that is a landmark feature (not yet designed) will be visible from all of the streets and will be the focal point of the gathering place. Mr. Sterry noted that they still need to serve sustainable aspects of the project in terms of rain water.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to improve the interface between the buildings and public open space;
 - Design development to improve relationship of north side of site to adjacent RS-1 neighborhood;
 - Improve the circulation and access from the SkyTrain station to site;
 - Consider moving the commercial/retail from East 12th Avenue to the internal plaza area;
 - Consider one parkade entrance in order to improve public realm and pedestrian movement.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and felt there were a lot of good improvements to the scheme.

The Panel commended the applicant for the amount of work considering the proposal is only at the rezoning stage. They supported the revised massing and associated density across the site. They also appreciated that the applicant had developed a phasing plan and had indicated the potential build out for the site.

The Panel thought the public open space had improved. They also thought that bringing the lobbies down to the main plaza level was an important move. Some of the Panel was somewhat disappointed that there wasn't a landmark building since there was potential in Phase 2 for a taller building. The Panel thought the relationship to the nearby sites had improved but thought the public realm needed to play a more active part in the development.

The Panel noted that there was still some work to be done with the interface between the buildings and the public open space. They also thought that Phase 2 seemed a little weak as the relationship with the rest of the site was problematic. As well the circulation from the SkyTrain station needed more work. Several Panel members noted that East 12th Avenue seemed a back lane to the station and wondered why there was so much commercial/retail frontage along that street. It was suggested that perhaps the plaza could be activated with the commercial/retail space. Another Panel member suggested having the access to the garage and loading on the East 12th Avenue side of the site with several Panel members suggesting that there needed to be only one access to the garage. They thought there seemed to be a lot of unfortunate design problems occurring as a result of having two parkade entrances.

The Panel didn't have any major issues with the landscape plans. They liked the rain gardens but were concerned with the amount of roadway and hoped the surface would be permeable. They agreed that the plaza would be successful as a casual seating area. Several Panel members thought the relationship between Phase 2 and the plaza and how traffic through the site was handled, needed to be improved. One Panel member suggested more green roofs as there are a lot of hard surfaces on the site.

The Panel asked that the application come back to the Panel at the DP stage.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Thompson thanked the Panel for their comments adding that they will continue to improve the project as they move forward.

2. Address:	1790 Beach Avenue (English Bay Bistro)
DE:	412932
Description:	Construction of a 400 m2 restaurant and associated terraces and loading area.
Zoning:	RS-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Acton Ostry Architects
Review:	First
Delegation:	Russell Acton, Acton Ostry Architects Bruce Hemstock, PWL Partnership Per Palm, Project Manager, Park Board
Staff:	Patrick O'Sullivan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-3)

- **Introduction:** Patrick O'Sullivan, Development Planner, introduced the application for restaurant at English Bay. Mr. O'Sullivan described the surrounding zoning and the site noting that the proposal falls within the English Bay Beach Park. The historic English Bay Bathhouse that was built in 1932 remains untouched by the proposal. The proposal is to replace an existing concession stand with a new bistro with indoor and outdoor seating and a takeout service. The proposal sits within the existing concession stand footprint, terraces and loading area and is positioned to retain the existing mature trees.

The proposal consists of two levels with 79 indoor seats at the seawall promenade level and also the kitchen, servery, cooler, staff and office areas, mechanical room and washrooms. There will also be seating for 68 patrons on the terrace. A take-out concession with associated seating for 48 is also located on this level. The Beach Avenue promenade level will include the entry terrace with public access to the park and to the restaurant. The narrow, glazed entry pavilion contains a seasonal servery for outdoor seating for 52 patrons.

A high quality and robust building materials are proposed. The primary building structure will be glu-lam timber and concrete. A feature glazed screen wall with a Joe Fortes archival image is planned along with a pressure-plate glazed skylight system for a feature coloured glass roof and canopies.

Mr. O'Sullivan noted that there are some challenges with loading as it would be necessary to cross the upper Beach Avenue pedestrian and cyclists promenade for vehicular and loading access. He added that a Loading Management Plan will be developed in consultation with Engineering Services to allow for non-peak traffic periods as much as possible. Garbage and recycling will be brought down to the seawall promenade level for pick up by Vancouver Board of Parks staff during early morning hours. Five parking spaces are required and will be available at Vancouver Board of Parks lots located within walking distance of the Bistro.

Mr. O'Sullivan stated that Vancouver Board of Parks has mandated that the building achieve LEED™ Gold Certification. The key sustainable features include solar shading, a high efficiency mechanical system, low energy lighting, heat sinks and high-performance glazing.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- Is the proposed increased intensity of restaurant use appropriate?
 - Is the proposed increased extent of the intervention (over that of the existing facility) on the view of the Beach Avenue water-frontage supportable?
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- Panel's general comment on the architecture, particularly given the site's prominence
- Panel's input on the possible inclusion of fritted archival imagery to the glazing at the main Beach Avenue entry. (An image of Joe Fortes is tentatively proposed for the translucent glazing to the north of the entry doors and an image of turn-of-the century beach-goers with the original wooden bathhouse has been suggested for the clear glazing to the south.)

Mr. O'Sullivan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Russell Acton, Architect, further described the proposal noting how the form and massing came about which pays homage to the adjacent English Bay Bathhouse. He noted that it is a challenging site because of the constraints with the promenade as well as the sidewalk on Beach Avenue. Mr. Acton described the architecture noting that the roof on the canopies and the entry pavilion will be covered with a multitude of coloured glass panels in yellow, orange and red hues associated with west coast sunsets. He described the design rationale noting that an image of Joe Fortes is proposed for the panels of translucent glass as well as the inclusion of images of historic English Bay archival photographs. Mr. Acton noted that there will be a loading management plan between the operator and the Park Board. All efforts will be made to coordinate the deliveries with other Park Board facilities around the city and will take place in the early morning hours. With respect to the loading, instead of having trucks turn across the sidewalk and descend to the Seawall promenade level to make deliveries, they would instead cross the Beach Avenue sidewalk and stop in front of the restaurant on the bicycle path in front of the restaurant entry terrace. Loading activities would be scheduled to take place during early morning hours to avoid potential conflicts with cyclists. Recycling and refuse would continue to be picked-up by the Park Board on the lower seawall promenade level.

Bruce Hemstock, Landscape Architect, stated that they looked at the proposal as an entire precinct in English Bay as well as respecting the Bathhouse and the promenade. There are number of existing trees that will stay along with the addition of a low boxwood planting to give a green edge around the lower level. Mr. Hemstock described the proposed lighting that will pickup the colour in the roof and bring it down to the plaza. As well they are looking at storm water management by channeling the water into the planted areas.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider designing a building for year around use;
 - Design development to glazing strategy to control heat gain on the upper level;
 - Design development to the Beach Avenue frontage as viewed from the Denman axis to make the upper storey look less abandoned in the off season;
 - Reconsider the loading strategy to resolve conflict with bicycle path; and
 - Design development to the concession area to allow for better visibility and longer line-ups.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought it was a great design.

The Panel supported the increase intensity of the restaurant use and thought the proposal was an opportunity to create a little gem of a building on one of the most active and public sites in Vancouver. They thought the applicant did a wonderful job of taking the program and putting it in an attractive building. One Panel member suggested the applicant ask a

restaurateur how they would use the space to make sure the program was workable for a restaurant. The Panel agreed that it was a shame that the space wouldn't be used all year around. They noted that a lot of tables would only be used in good weather. They thought the building should be considered a fully programmed building as they felt the location would generate business all year around. One panel member suggested that the proposal was too timid in its size, scope and function for such a prominent site.

The Panel raised the concern that through restaurant operation (table umbrellas, stacked chairs, perimeter plastic curtain similar to the condition at the Watermark) would detract from the architecture. The Panel encouraged the applicant to get an operator in place for feedback on how the space would be used. They added that any operator would probably see that they could populate the upstairs all year around, possibly by incorporating the upper outdoor seating indoors. The suggested the applicant's start with that premise and to look at what is required for operable glass walls.

The Panel clearly expressed their appreciation for the architecture, but were concerned with possible heat gain due to the glass roof on the restaurant. They underlined the importance of keeping mechanical components concealed and not on the roof. One Panel member pointed out that the mechanical spaces seem small for the size of the development. They noted that on hot days the upper floor would be like a green house and the design team needs to address this carefully. Several Panel members suggested installing operable glazing to control the solar gain in order to achieve LEED™ Gold certified.

The Panel agreed that the building needs to be as transparent as possible to support the street end view with one Panel member acknowledging that it would be like a lighthouse at the end of Denman Street. However, their biggest concern was that the transparent space could be a problem in the off-season as the space might look abandoned especially at night. One Panel member suggested that the building could be a year around venue for secondary uses such as weddings and other events even if the lower area was closed.

The Panel was very concerned with the loading area conflicting with the bicycle path. They felt having delivery vehicles parked on areas intended for public circulation for any length of time wasn't appropriate and that the current solution was not workable. The Panel also raised the issue that the handicapped accessibility should be improved.

Panel members generally supported the proposed art screen wall incorporating of historic imagery if delicately and subtly handled, but maintained that views through must still be permitted. Several Panel members suggested that an art program could also be integrated on the side and retaining walls at the concession level as well and that a sculpture element could be added to the plaza.

Some Panel members thought the concession stand area was too small to accommodate long summer line-ups and that the concession area is not visible from the seawall for pedestrians walking south.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Acton thanked the Panel for their comments stating that they will go back and talk to the client around implementing some of their ideas.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.