

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: March 14, 2007

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
John Wall, Chair
Walter Francl
Douglas Watts
Bill Harrison
Mark Ostry
Gerry Eckford (Item #2 only)
Alan Boniface

REGRETS: Maurice Pez
Tom Bunting
Richard Henry
Albert Bicol
Martin Nielsen

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	6111-6161 Oak Street and 1007 West 46 th Avenue
2.	190 Prior Street (formally 901 Main Street)

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Wall 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.

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|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Address: | 6111-6161 Oak Street and 1007 West 46 th Avenue |
| DE: | Rezoning |
| Use: | 30 townhouses with underground parking |
| Zoning: | RS-1 to CD-1 |
| Application Status: | RZ |
| Architect: | Formwerks Homes Inc. |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Craig Rowland, James Bussey, Gerry Eckford |
| Staff: | Abigail Riley/Paul Cheng |

Panel member Gerry Eckford declared a conflict of interest and did not participate in discussion on this item.

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-0)

- **Introduction:** Abigail Riley, Rezoning Planner, gave an overview for the development in the Oakridge/Langara area on the west side of Oak Street between West 45th and West 46th Avenues. The application is asking for a rezoning from RS-1, Single Family Residential, to CD-1, Comprehensive Development District, to permit the construction of 30 townhouses with a density of 1 FSR. The rezoning is consistent with Council's Policy for the area. In terms of character, the policy encourages that there be a domestic multi-family character, and small scale residential ambiance and there be as many entry doors as possible onto the street. Ms. Riley noted that since 1995 when the zoning was approved by Council, there have been seven other rezonings for townhouse development up to a density of 1 FSR.

Paul Cheng, Development Planner, described the existing site which includes four lots with single family dwellings. Mr. Cheng noted there is a grade change that climbs about two feet along the northeast side of Oak Street and also six or seven feet going west on West 45th Avenue. The proposal is for row-houses with a front and rear door that is ground oriented. The units will be either two or three bedrooms with a semi-private courtyard space that will be shared by all the residents. The material being proposed is for the lower elevation to have a brick rain screen with medium texture stucco on the upper floors and hardy panel cladding on the dormer elements. The policy states that the building height should be 30 feet, but due to the topographically changes on the site, 35 feet could be a possibility. The applicant has suggested adding a third storey which will free up more open space on the ground plane.

The advice of the Panel was sought specifically on the following:

- 1) Considering the existing urban context, is the overall form of development supportable with respect to use, height, density and massing? Particular considerations include overshadow, overlook and privacy for existing neighbouring properties.
- 2) Considering the increase in unit density and floor space that this project receives through a rezoning, has the proposal earned this increase through high quality design? Particular considerations include:
 - The proposed interface with the public realm, including the height and material treatment of the retaining walls and the suitability of landscaped berms.
 - The material treatment of the buildings.

- The landscaping of the semi-private realm including proposed trees and the soil depth to support these trees.
- 3) Are the proposed setbacks from the property lines along Oak Street, West 45th Avenue and West 46th Avenue appropriate? Particular considerations include the existing neighbouring properties and possible improvements to the liveability to some of the proposed units.

Mr. Cheng and Ms. Riley took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** James Bussey, Architect, further described the architectural design of the project. The architectural context of the surrounding neighbourhood was used to find the architectural expression with respect to the massing and material on the project. Gerry Eckford, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans for the site as well as the lane treatment and plans for the courtyard space. Craig Rowland, Developer, further described the project noting the decks on the second floor will be used as secondary outside areas.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects:**
 - Consider detailing of the landscaping and how the transition will work with the grade change from the entry gardens to the sidewalk level;
 - Consider a more civic formality for the Oak Street Elevation;
 - Consideration of the interior space for potentially more social or communal uses; and
 - Consider more sustainability initiatives.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel unanimously supported the application.

The Panel agreed that the overall form of development was supportable with respect to use, height, density and massing as they felt it was appropriate for the site. The Panel had no concerns regarding shadow impacts, the overlook and privacy on the existing neighbouring properties. The Panel also supported the rezoning for the site.

One Panel member had some concerns regarding the landscaping in the public realm and would like to see the edges finished properly. One Panel member suggested the landscape architect revisit the species of trees planned for the courtyard. One Panel member suggested the applicant look at the nature of the interior courtyard space as there might be an opportunity for gatherings or barbeques.

The Panel agreed that the proposed setbacks were appropriate and were needed to make the grade transition from the site to the sidewalk level.

One Panel member felt there was minimal urban context and that it was more a suburban context noting that the context and character of the neighbourhood was more post war bungalows and monster houses than the Tudor forms used in the architectural expression in the proposal. It was suggested that the project will set a precedent for this type of development that will occur on Oak Street in the future.

The Panel supported the unit density and floor space and thought it was achievable noting that Oak Street is a busy corridor and was a good location for this type of project.

The Panel thought the general palate of materials was appropriate given the reference to heritage architecture with one Panel member suggesting using materials that closely referenced the Tudor revival with stucco being the most appropriate material.

Regarding sustainability initiatives, one Panel member encouraged the applicant to look at geothermal or other sources of energy that would be sustainable.

The Panel agreed that they would like to see the proposal come back to the Panel at the Development Permit stage.

- **Motion**

Mr. Francl moved and Mr. Ostry seconded and was the decision of the Panel to have the submission come back to the Urban Design Panel at the Development Permit stage.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bussey thanked the Panel and noted that the comments were fair and well tuned to the project.

2. Address:	190 Prior Street (formally 901 Main Street)
DE:	411105
Use:	Rehabilitation of existing 5 storey heritage building and construction of 8 storey residential building at the rear
Zoning:	FC-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Christopher Bozyk Architects Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Craig Taylor, Jeffrey Staates, Rodney Rao
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Senior Development Planner introduced the project at the corner of Main and Prior Streets. The Panel grouped around the model where Mr. Segal described the surrounding area noting various properties and developments on Main Street. The zoning is FC-1 which allows for up to 5 FSR with 3 FSR maximum for residential with the proposal asking for 6.83 FSR (inclusive of heritage density bonus). The proposal is for the refurbishment and redevelopment of 901 Main Street which was the former BC Electric Railway Men's Quarters. The form of development anticipates the possible redevelopment of the entire block and attempts to optimize the development opportunity for the subject site.

The advice of the Panel was sought specifically on the following:

- 1) Has the blank wall been properly handled?
- 2) Has the new construction been integrated with the heritage building and the surrounds?
- 3) Does the development fit into the block and the context of City Gate? (Comment on the pedestrian/public realm interface along Prior Street.)
- 4) Has the additional density and increase in height been properly handled and integrated? and
- 5) Is the car parking relaxation for six cars supportable?

Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Craig Taylor, Architect, further described the project noting the existing building was not currently listed on the Heritage Register. As part of the heritage density bonusing the applicant will be seeking to add the building at 901 Main Street to the Heritage Register. Mr. Taylor stated that the new building respects the lines of the exiting building with the new floor slabs running continually through both buildings. The project consists of eight floors of residential with nine rental apartments on the third through fifth floor and the owner's principle residence on the remaining three floors. The first floor will be for commercial use with a six car garage. Mr. Taylor described the sustainable initiatives for the project noting the use of LED lighting throughout the building as well the possible use of geothermal to heat the building. Jeffery Staates, Landscape Architect, described the landscape treatment for the project noting the use of slender trees adjacent to the building as a buffer to the viaduct.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Quality construction is essential to the success of the blank wall.
 - Consider solutions for animating the blank wall;
 - Consider design development to the upper two floors of the new building to better differentiate between the old and new buildings;
 - Consider solutions for additional parking;
 - Consider solutions for landscaping to improve the public realm; and
 - Consider more sustainability initiatives.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel unanimously supported the application and congratulated the applicant and owner for such a courageous step on a difficult site.

The Panel thought the applicant had gone to some length to mitigate the expansiveness of the blank wall noting the quality of construction would be important and to keep it as simple as possible. A couple of Panel members thought it needed to be more expressive and suggested using recessed shadow lines or another elements to make it more than just a surface. Another Panel member encouraged the applicant to look at a solution for the possibility of rain water staining the wall.

The Panel agreed that the project had earned the additional density and increase in height and thought the new construction had been generally well integrated with the old building. A majority of Panel members had some concerns regarding the top two floors of the building where the addition overhangs the old building and seems overbearing and heavy. One member commented that new building should be less integrated with the old building and more stand alone. Another member suggested taking some of the mass off the old building and having a rectilinear façade on the new building. Two Panel members felt the massing was fine. The Panel noted that the building will be viewed mostly from cars coming down the Georgia Viaduct although one Panel member thought the building might be visible from a distance.

The Panel thought the integration of the public realm regarding the pedestrian and automobile was well handled. One panel member would like to see a right-of-way go through to Main Street. Regarding the garages, most of the Panel thought they were appropriate and would make a wonderful little street but thought the parking relaxation was too steep. Several Panel members were concerned about the parking and suggested there should be strategies for off-site parking or a way to get more parking spaces in the building. Also a clearer separation between the pedestrian area and parking was needed and it was suggested that there should be some kind of element such as bollards that could pop up when the entry to the garages wasn't in use.

One Panel member thought a double row of trees would improve the public realm. A couple of Panel members suggested there was an opportunity to do something rather than a typical landscape response and to do something that shows the avant-garde nature of the building. Most of the Panel liked the planters on the elevation next to the slot.

Several Panel members thought the location for the pool was a little odd but liked that it was incorporated into the building.

A couple of members were concerned about privacy issues and thought it would be a shame if the façade didn't have privacy screens. The Panel didn't want to see blinds but suggested the screens could be integrated into the building in an architectural way. Several Panel members encouraged the applicant to include more sustainable measures such as using cross ventilation and cooling that can be done passively. The Panel thought that all the detail finishes would be important to the success of the project.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Taylor thanked the Panel for their constructive criticism noting the building was slated for demolition and this project will give new life to an old building.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.