

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: March 15, 2006

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Alan Endall, Chair
Larry Adams
Nigel Baldwin
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
Marta Farevaag
Ronald Lea
Peter Wreglesworth

REGRETS: Robert Barnes
Margot Long
C.C. Yao

NEW MEMBERS (Non-voting this meeting):
Albert Bicol, Engineer
Tom Bunting, Architect
Walter Francl, Architect
Eileen Keenan (Vancouver Planning Commission)
John Wall, Architect

(New members James Cheng, Architect, and Bill Harrison, Landscape Architect, were not present)

RECORDING SECRETARY: Debbie Kempton (Item 1)
Carol Hubbard (Items 2 and 3)*

*Not present at the meeting. Minutes were composed from the audio recording of the meeting.

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	102 - 160 West 1st Avenue (Playhouse)
2.	Davie/Mainland Station (Yaletown)
3.	Robson/Georgia Station (Robson)
4.	Hastings/Cordova Station (Waterfront)

1. Address:	102 - 160 West 1st Avenue (Playhouse)
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	M2 - CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	GBL
Owner:	Wall Financial Group
Review:	First
Delegation:	Stu Lyon, Bruno Wall, Bruce Hemstock
Staff:	John Madden, Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-5)

- **Introduction:** John Madden, Rezoning Planner, introduced this rezoning application for a section of the Southeast False Creek Private Lands which is currently zoned M-2. Referring to the model, Mr. Madden described the surrounding site context, noting that the Private Lands extend from Wylie Street between 1st and 2nd Avenues to Main Street. The proposed form of development is consistent with the False Creek ODP adopted by Council in July 2005.

Manitoba Street will become the focus for a future commercial centre and a park. The Southeast False Creek ODP sets out a strong vision that this will be a model for all aspects of sustainability. 2nd Avenue will be the primary arterial street and 1st Avenue will function as a model for a sustainable street with the location of the streetcar as well as the conduction of storm water, rain water capture and release into the basin.

There will be a series of key public spaces and parks interconnected, as well as mini-parks interspersed throughout the community. In terms of transit, the community will be well serviced with the streetcar, a rapid bus along 2nd Avenue, the future Canada Line RAV Station and the existing Millennium and Expo Line that serve downtown and the region to the north.

With respect to land use, Southeast False Creek will be primarily mixed use and predominantly residential with mixed uses at grade on 2nd Avenue. The intent is that 2nd Avenue will have the ability to provide for flexible use over time to include live/work, residential, service and light industrial uses.

Mr. Madden noted that a supplement to the ODP, the Southeast False Creek Design Considerations, documents design guidelines for applicants. This document outlines the integral cornerstones such as form, character and height as part of the contextual response, noting that this should respond to the surrounding Mount Pleasant industrial uses and industrial character previously existing in Southeast False Creek. There will be a variety of heights, forms and textures that will be expressed through building design and height throughout site. There are a series of taller elements on the Playhouse site.

Mr. Madden noted that staff wish to take an integrated approach to sustainability through the development of a Green Building Policy strictly for Southeast False Creek. Part of that will consider emphasis on energy efficiency, water efficiency, storm water management (both on and off-site), rain water harvesting, urban agriculture, as well as implementing sustainable transportation measures. The creation of a neighbourhood energy utility was recently approved by Council which would see the recapturing of some of the heat and transferring it to service buildings in the Olympic village and some of the Private Lands developments. All new developments in the Private Lands are expected to be developed to a LEEDS Silver equivalent.

Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, noted the subject site is a large lot and is quite heavily massed. This application includes the provision of the Playhouse Theatre located on the street level of the westerly portion of the site on Columbia Street. The Playhouse Theatre use is a cultural amenity and much of the density was negotiated at the ODP stage.

Panel advice is sought on the following:

- Use, form and density;
 - Massing on Manitoba Street;
 - Interface of Theater use along 1st Avenue;
 - Shadow impact on the neighbourhood park to the north;
 - Location of the Playhouse Theatre entrance lobby with respect to the 3 metre sidewalk on 1st Avenue;
 - Comments on the use of roof tops as semi-private open spaces rather than just green roofs;
 - Visible response to environmental sustainability and the response to issues of overheating in the summer and solar gain in the winter;
 - Scale of the Theatre building and loading operations on the lane;
 - Proximity of building masses to one another.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Stu Lyon, Architect, reviewed the proposal in greater detail. Bruce Hemstock, Landscape Architect, described the landscape scheme. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel Consensus:**
 - Concerns about the relentless aspect of the massing of the forming buildings, the similarity and truncated nature of the mid-rise forms that are based on a tower model and trying to be towers but they are not quite towers;
 - Needs work to achieve more variation to massing that is driven by contextual considerations;
 - Try to achieve more variety in the massing and in particular to relieve the density in the mid-portions of the site. Explore with the City staff, a way to achieve some relief from the diagrammatic nature of the height restrictions and density expectations that are placed on this site;
 - Concern about the shadow impact on the park to the north;
 - Improve the relationship of this development to the development to the south across the lane;
 - Further consideration of the interface of the theatre use with the street. Look for ways to enhance the presence and expression of the theatre more so that it is more evident;
 - Concerns about not only the depth of the 3 metre sidewalk and allowance for crush space and access to the theatre but also the detail of treatment of that 3 metre right-of-way. Try to look for detailed ways to achieve a better sense of space and generosity there.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel did not support this application. The Chair acknowledged the added challenge of being the first application coming forward and with the most density. He said that this application has to form a good precedent and set the stage for the development that will follow. The Panel had no issues with the proposed massing of the Manitoba Street fronting portion and supported the use of tower roofs as usable semi-private amenity areas and to provide access to that area.

Several Panel members suggested that the Applicant reconsider locating the theatre further to the east, and some Panel members suggested it could even be located further to the east and the pedestrian connection shifted more to the west to be in alignment with the connecting street; however, it was also felt by some Panel members that that may not get the desired effect and that it may be enough to consider reorienting the theatre lobby more towards the mews in order to help animate the mews and create some breathing space for that situation.

The Panel thought the Development Permit application stage issues of sustainability should be addressed in a very fundamental and visible way that it is demonstrated in the form and articulation of the buildings.

Some members questioned the appropriateness of emphasizing the pedestrian use of the lane given the degree of loading operations etc. that take place in the lane. It was felt that the lane, at present, is not succeeding as a pedestrian oriented environment.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Lyon thanked Panel for its constructive commentary. He said that he will continue to respond to comments from the Panel and City staff. He noted that the additional density is required in order to keep the Playhouse facility; however it has been challenging to make that work, particularly since the height limits stipulated in the ODP cannot be exceeded.

2. Address:	Davie/Mainland Station (Yaletown)
3.	Robson/Georgia Station (Robson)
4.	Hastings/Cordova Station (Waterfront)
Use:	Transit Station
Application Status:	Workshop
Architect:	VIA
Owner:	InTransit BC/RAVCO
Review:	First
Delegation:	Chris McCarthy, Allen Parker, Graham McGarva
Staff:	Anita Molaro, Donny Wong

The Yaletown, Robson and Waterfront Canada Line transit stations were presented concurrently, each with their own unique context and built form opportunity.

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Urban Design Planner, introduced this workshop discussion and briefly explained the City's role which is to provide advice on issues relating to the alignment, stations, station entries and connectivity. Each of the stations will be taken through a design advisory process which is based largely on the typical major development application process. The stations will be reviewed by the Panel in the form of a workshop and reported to the Development Permit Board for advice only since the stations do not require a development permit. In addition to the design advisory process around each of the stations, City staff will be undertaking a Precinct Planning Exercise to ensure appropriate bicycle and pedestrian access and dealing with traffic, parking and other issues in and around the stations. The early concepts were to help the public understand the scale and mass of the stations within their immediate context. Since the detailed design of the stations is in its early phase this workshop is an opportunity for the Urban Design panel to provide creative urban design and architectural advice into the station designs as they are being developed.

The following are the City's urban design objectives for the station designs on which the advice/comments of the Panel is sought:

- achieve a strong sense of publicness, conveyed through the highest quality architecture, also highlighting access and openness;
- achieve good connectivity/accessibility for transit users and pedestrians;
- achieve a safe environment both within and around the station;
- achieve high quality public realm interface with high amenity sidewalk areas with active edges providing pedestrian interest and weather protection;
- allow for future commercial/retail opportunities within or near stations.

These stations provide an opportunity to be a statement of public architecture and an extension of the public realm for many years to come. The Panel is asked to consider and advise on the public nature of these stations given the highest quality architecture is the goal.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Allen Parker, SCN Lavalin, briefly described the overarching design considerations. He advised that the stations must be in operation by 2009 and the overall budget has been established and is fixed. The alignment is fixed and the locations of the stations and their functions and configurations have been established. Mr. Parker said that there is a commitment to creating a coherent architectural identity while responding to each station context. He reviewed the three basic principles which are: the human experience, the architectural philosophy should be rooted in what is unique about Vancouver's natural context, and the system should have a quality of timelessness. Mr. Parker

advised that light, and the quality of light, is a very important element in all of the stations. The applicant team wants to ensure that light penetrates the depths of the stations as much as possible.

Graham McGarva, VIA Architecture, briefly reviewed each of the stations. He advised that the architecture will be subtle and timeless rather than historical or fashionable. There is heritage context in two of the sites.

Yaletown Station: Ms. Molaro said that Yaletown Station will be located in the Bill Curtis Plaza at Davie Street and Mainland and the lane. The station entry will be located where the existing brick parkade entry folly is currently. The parkade exit stair will be rebuilt and the elevator will be relocated elsewhere on the plaza. Ms. Molaro advised that neighbourhood workshops were conducted which identified the need to minimize the station entry footprint, locate the EasyPark elevator in a way that will enhance community use of the Plaza which is currently used for weekend flea markets and other events, reflect the heritage character of the neighbourhood, and reinforce neighbourhood ownership. Ms. Molaro noted that the existing lane provides service for the surrounding buildings and is often congested. Diagonal pedestrian movements across the lane to the plaza will be discouraged. Mr. McGarva said that Yaletown Station will see a lot of movement going through the Bill Curtis Plaza.

Panel Commentary:

The following comments/questions arose in the general discussion that followed:

- Where does the context driven design relate to these as versus Canada Lines desire for a consistent vocabulary as a citywide experience? Is consistency all below grade?

The three architectural teams have had discussions around the below grade piece. They have also considered attitudes towards glazing and emphasis on horizontal expression, as well as connection details beyond stair treads and handrails that have to be consistent throughout the system. Currently there is debate about what extent does the response to Yaletown influence what may be a more expressive form in a more suburban location with less visual strength.

- The Broadway/City Hall and False Creek South Stations were different from one another and felt more successful. It is disappointing to hear that these stations are returning to the idea of looking similar. Having a railing detail similar within the station for consistency is acceptable but in this case it feels as though the architect is hamstrung by the approach. It feels as though we are aiming too low and it is disappointing.
- Open up the plaza.
- The site is tight and feels convoluted. How do you turn that into a delightful experience?

The applicant team responded that there has been discussion around light galleries and getting light to the first concourse level. There is some potential for retail at the Yaletown station. There will be an experience of going from daylight to light and then to colour so that there is an experience as you move through the station.

- Consider installing light tubes to get sunlight down into the station.

The applicant team responded that a variety of technologies are being explored to make the platforms as light and bright as possible. The light tubes have been discussed and anything within the budget limits is being considered. The neighbourhood is very concerned that the footprint of the station entry should not exceed the footprint of the existing folly because they

don't want to lose any plaza area. The challenge becomes finding a way to provide good access to the station and get light down.

- If you shoehorn people into tubes that take them down into the stations people won't use the system. Consider the bigger end result and don't base the design only on the concerns of neighbours that don't want a bigger footprint. The station seems claustrophobic. Consider the spatial experience that transit users have to go through.
- This station design needs a really strong move that gets past all of the contortions and links vertically between the ground and platform and is also associated with getting as much natural light down into the station as possible.
- Is there anyway that the station could serve as a function for the markets that occur in the plaza area? Consider installing a canopy that extends from the station for the use of the people that participate in the market.
- Try to achieve stronger legibility and attitude from station to station.
- The Yaletown character is important and if the station can reflect that character it has a better chance of being embraced by the community.
- The approach is too timid with the park.
- The entrance off of Mainland is a better approach. Right now the station is turning its back on the plaza and it should be more integral to the plaza.

Robson Station (Robson/Georgia)

Ms. Molaro advised that two options are being considered for the entry to this station which is located between Robson and Georgia Streets. The first is a series of circulation elements (stairs, elevator and escalators) located within the street along the Sears building façade. A second option is being explored with Cadillac Fairview, owners of Pacific Centre, which would have the station entry located within the Pacific Centre plaza. A rezoning inquiry has been made by Cadillac Fairview which shows the entry within the Pacific Plaza with new retail. If this proposal is pursued it will be reviewed by the Panel as a rezoning application. In the meantime, the Panel's initial response to the opportunity this presents for Georgia and Granville for a piece of iconic architecture is requested. The Panel is also asked to consider the alternative entry location on Robson Street if the Pacific Plaza location does not come to fruition.

Mr. McGarva briefly described the proposal for the in-street entry option and responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel Commentary:

The following comments were made by the Panel on the in-street option for the station entry:

- are there ongoing discussions or is there potential for the owners of the Sears building to make modifications to their building?

Mr. Molaro advised that Cadillac Fairview also owns the Sears building and leases it to Sears. They are not prepared to enter into discussions about modifying the building.

- the three isolated elements should be made a single experience.
- There could be a vertical expression of some kind in front of the side of the building (not necessarily attached).

- Care should be taken to not limit the future of the Sears building because there is the potential to ultimately convert it to offices.

Waterfront Station (Hastings/Cordova)

Ms. Molaro advised there are two proposals being considered for this station. There will be two station entrances, the first within the CP Station and the second either an in-street option or within Sinclair Centre. The latter is being pursued with Public Works Canada but negotiations are not yet concluded. Sensitive treatment of entries within both the heritage buildings will be an important consideration. Ms. Molaro briefly described the linkage to the Expo Line at this station. She noted that the existing pedestrian bridge that connects 200 Granville Street will need to be removed as part of the construction, and issues relating to fire access and convenient access to the building are being discussed with the owner (Cadillac Fairview). This forms part of the larger Hub Study that is currently underway.

Mr. McGarva briefly described the proposal and the entry options under consideration and responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel Commentary:

The following comments were made by the Panel:

- given the constraints of the Sinclair Centre entry option the in-street option might be simpler and a more elegant solution if you treat the entrance as lightly as possible with a simple glass roof, finely detailed. A simple glass sculptural piece could provide an attractive contrast to the heritage building.
- Granville Street is supposed to be a transit street so it is important for the station to have a real presence on the street. If the on-street option is pursued it should be matched with the other on-street station entry at Georgia Street.
- There is a need for washrooms in all the stations, notwithstanding issues around security.
- On all the stations it would be helpful to have a matrix or some general ideas and sketches about the common language being discussed. It is difficult to evaluate the schemes as they are drawn now because they seem to be very different. It would be better if they are different, but there will be common elements and it would be helpful to have a series of diagrams or elevations that begin to show how, for example, the Robson Station could be similar to the Waterfront Station.

Mr. Parker agreed it is an excellent suggestion but they are not yet at the stage where it can be put together. Meetings are being held with the subway and aerial station design teams to try to identify those elements, attitudes or materiality that constitute the Canada Line.