

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** March 16, 2005

**TIME:** 9:00 am

**PLACE:** Westin Bayshore Hotel, Salon #3  
1601 Bayshore Drive

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Larry Adams, Chair  
Nigel Baldwin  
Robert Barnes  
Shahla Bozorgzadeh  
Ronald Lea  
Peter Wreglesworth

**GUEST  
PANELISTS:** Peter Ellis  
James Hancock  
Matthias Sauerbruch  
Bing Thom

**REGRETS:** James Cheng  
Alan Endall  
Marta Farevaag  
Margot Long  
Edward Smith  
C.C. Yao

**CITY STAFF:** Jonathan Barrett  
Phil Mondor

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carrie Peacock, Raincoast Ventures

---

### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 1133 West Georgia Street

---

---

1. Address:	1133 West Georgia Street
Use:	Mixed (52 storeys)
Zoning:	DD - CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	MCM
Owner:	Holborn Group
Review:	First
Delegation:	Mark Whitehead, Don Wuori
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett, Phil Mondor

---

**EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-7) (2 votes for deferral)**

• **Introduction:**

Chair Adams called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m., introduced the four guest panelists in attendance (as voting members for the meeting), and advised that four UDP Panel members were absent due to perceived conflicts of interest. He also introduced representatives of the application in attendance, and acknowledged City staff for coordinating the meeting.

• **Introduction of Proponents:**

Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, offered background information regarding the project and noted that the Panel had received on the previous day, a thorough briefing regarding the Panel's procedures and mandate. Mr. Barrett reminded the Panel that rezoning was required when a proposal did not meet the parameters of the zone, and noted that:

- residential was not currently permitted within the zone;
- a density of 17.5 FSR was proposed, in a zone limited to 9 FSR; and
- a height of 550 ft. was proposed, in a zone with a height limitation of 450 ft.

Mr. Barrett further reviewed the parameters of the building policy for higher buildings, noting that buildings 450-600 ft. in height should:

- be situated on one of Vancouver's three primary streets: Georgia, Granville or Burrard;
- exhibit architectural excellence;
- achieve other community aspects (i.e. a cultural or low cost housing);
- provide on-site open space, representing an addition to downtown green and plaza spaces;
- include, where possible, uses of community significance; and
- not contribute to adverse microclimate effects.

Mr. Barrett added that a sustainability policy was being developed.

Information boards displayed around the meeting room regarding the skyline and view cones were referenced, and an objective to create a skyline 'dome' in the downtown centre, tapering off around the outside of city, was discussed.

• **Applicant's Opening Comments:**

Mark Whitehead, MCM Partnership, offered historical information regarding Vancouver's higher buildings over the prior 95 years, including the Dominion Building, Sun Tower, and Hotel Vancouver, which were all constructed of steel, stone or brick and which dominated the skyline at the time of their construction. Further information was offered regarding the city's later and higher mixed-use buildings including the TD Centre, Park Place and Wall Centre, noting that their heights had been negotiated through a zoning process.

Mr. Whitehead referenced the displayed information boards and offered the following comments regarding the project:

- a public observation deck, onsite microclimate and open space were included in the design;
- residential, local transportation and business uses surrounded the site;
- the design included permeability to pedestrians between Bute and Thurlow Streets;
- the north side lane, of superior quality, measured 33 ft. wide and faced townhouses;
- the lot was 200 ft. x 122 ft., and had a slope allowing for underground parking and loading;
- residential units were planned above commercial units;
- the building would be set back to allow the graciousness of the lane;
- there would be no overshadowing of public open spaces;
- the building responded to all view corridors with minimal impacts on adjacent developments;
- a publicly accessed sky garden would offer significant views of local mountains;
- the form of the building was subtly flared, and was intended to complete the skyline;
- a mechanical floor surrounded by an observation deck;
- retail level would divide the residential and hotel levels;
- the floor plan included 235,000 square ft. of space;
- owners of the building also controlled the properties to the east;
- the project would utilize the existing parking ramp of the Terasen Centre;
- a hotel lobby would be on the second floor; the sky garden lobby on the third floor;
- observation elevators would share an elevator shaft with the residential elevators;
- 200 potential long term hotel rooms were included in the design;
- contextual elevations displayed on information boards indicated basic use of materials;
- the design included non-mirrored, vision clear glass in the blue-gray range, and a concrete base in an undetermined colour;
- MCM was the recipient of various awards (i.e. Powersmart), and participated on a number of councils (i.e. Green Building Council);
- MCM was currently one of the three LEED assessors in Canada;
- Electronic Arts and a Children's Hospital lab were current MCM projects;
- the goal of the project was for LEEDs certification at the silver level;
- architecture would address storm water management and potential energy generation;
- there would be 4-5 ft. of soil on the observation deck which would contribute to the structure's efficiency;
- elevators would generate electricity on their way down, reducing their consumption;
- hydro-electricity (created by a "tail race" using a vertical aqueduct carrying storm water down the building), wind energy and fuel cell options were being investigated; and
- the existing building/abandoned construction site was previously seismically upgraded, and would be dismantled; concrete and rebar collected during the dismantling could be recycled.

During a review of the first of three models, which indicated the correct topography of city and building heights that currently challenged the 'dome', Mr. Whitehead identified the locations of tall buildings in Vancouver, including the Waterfront, Shangri-La, and the proposed development. It was noted that the project's base was designed as a podium cradling a crystal form like a "bouquet of flowers".

In response to questions raised, Mr. Whitehead noted that subtle flaring in the design accentuated the sky garden, and coupled with the dominant Shangri-La; and the building would be 50 ft. shorter than the top of Shangri-La, and 90 ft. shorter in the back.

During a review of the second of three models, which indicated a closer view of the project, Mr. Whitehead acknowledged:

- the base of the building was a 60 ft. high podium; demarcated by a mansard tower at the west end of the Terasen Centre;
- the ground floor of the design would include retail;
- the adjacent lane treatment would be determined after consultation with the city's Engineering Department (not likely asphalt);
- the face contextually responded to neighbouring heights;
- towards the building's roof, the angled lines were facets of the 'crystal', and included rods of stainless steel which at the top of the building defined the perimeter of the garden; and
- three of the building's faces would be subtly flared.

During a review of the third of three models, and landscape information boards, Don Wouri, Landscape Architect acknowledged that:

- the project included two publicly accessible gardens (the sky garden and the street level water garden); and two visually accessible gardens (at the 50 ft. and 200 ft. levels);
- each of garden composition would include vegetation, water and natural stone;
- the sky garden's lattice work of steel rods, was intended for structural purposes; each crossing lattice created a constellation, which intended to inspire the project's edges, pools and landscape patterns;
- building gardens in the sky in Vancouver was not a new venture;
- rainwater would be collected on the roof, and would feed into ground level water pools;
- raised planters with trees and seating would be adjacent to the Terasen building;
- the publicly-oriented ground garden would be pedestrian friendly;
- trees suggested by an Arborist for planting in the sky garden would be:
  - 15-20 ft. high (reaching 30-45 ft. over 10 years);
  - grown in 4-6 ft. of soil;
  - of a recommended species (i.e. spruce, cedar, sequoia); and
  - protected from the winds by glazing.

#### Questions:

Mr. Whitehead responded to questions of the UDP, noting the following:

- the sky garden included approximately 30,000 cubic ft. of soil and defined walkable areas;
- retail or hotel operations at the roof level had not been resolved;
- elevator cabs to the sky garden could be accessed by the hotel lobby;
- expert considerations had been obtained regarding the gap in the top of the building;
- potential vibration of the building's edges were being addressed to avoid noise;
- the weight of the garden's soil would stabilize the building;
- pocket gardens were inviting to the public;
- a link to the Terasen building at the ground plane, could be discussed with the city;
- the ground level offered mostly retail and publicly accessible space;
- the plaza was the same width as the lane, and related to the scale of the building to the east; small spaces could be successful without being expansive;
- a connection between the podium's roof and the Terasen building had been suggested; an arcade connection between the buildings was anticipated;
- parking for the building met city regulations; public parking was provided in the adjacent building;
- five star hotels typically would not have transit buses idling out front;
- the access ramp to parking would be adjacent to the fitness area; the level above was intended for a meeting room area;

- parking for the project lined up with parking for the Terasen building, and increased available parking on the site;
- residents of the building could use the parks;
- the building stepped back at 65 ft.; this would be acceptable for a hotel;
- the project's concrete types and colours had not yet been determined;
- opportunities for internal balconies could be considered;
- every suite of the hotel would have opening windows;
- stainless steel rods attached to every floor, would assist window washing;
- the top third of the Wall Centre was similar in expression to this project;
- the design and elements of the project metaphorically represented claws holding a diamond on a ring;
- studies were needed relative to the appropriate glass system;
- public access to the rooftop included an elevator up three floors to the sky garden/retail lobby; and a second elevator ride to the top of the building;
- there would be two parking elevators 'piggy-backed' from ground level, and three elevators 'piggy-backed' to the top of the building;
- parking elevators faced the inside the building and sky garden elevators faced outside;
- residents would have their own elevator lobbies;
- security measures for the building had yet to be determined, and would likely be based on the popularity of the public gardens;
- art programs/cultural contributions for the building had not yet been addressed;
- the LEED system focused on energy, movement of water, and the recycling of materials;
- the exterior wall would be double walls or triple glazed systems;
- shading could be incorporated into the glass or from the outside; and
- this would be a sustainable building, by virtue of reaching silver LEEDs certification.

#### Recess

The meeting recessed at 10:27 a.m. and reconvened at 10:31 a.m.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**  
Jonathan Barrett, Department Planner, acknowledged that sustainability was important to Council, referenced a requirement for overall architectural excellence in higher building design, and reviewed the need for consideration of the following project attributes:
  - mixed uses;
  - a proposed density of 17.5 FSR;
  - the overall built form in relation to adjacent neighbours;
  - overall building character;
  - four landscaped areas;
  - extra height;
  - mid-block pedestrian link and sky garden as physical public amenities; and
  - sustainability.

Chair Adams led the meeting in a discussion regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the submission, during which the following comments were offered:

#### Presentation

- the applicant is commended for thorough presentation, but not enough detail regarding materials and detailing;
- more detail should be available before rezoning is granted;
- presentation is so extensive that the building looks like it's ready to be built, yet answers to questions indicates it's still very preliminary and does not display a single metaphoric relation; further discussion with the Panel would be required.

#### Land uses

- uses are supported but disappointing that Vancouver can't sustain commercial; support hotel as commercial;
- downtown residential will add vitality.

#### Density

- site seems small to realise proposed density; density seems high, not that building is too tall but the way it is handled at grade;
- the density requested should be equally balanced by public amenities and architectural excellence;
- concern about density - is much higher than other buildings in the downtown;
- a doubling of density places a value on the public amenities and architectural excellence which should be provided;
- the adjacent Shangri-La earned its height and density, paid its dues with a very significant and exceptional generous public domain; it's also a corner site with monumentality on all four sides;
- this project is 'dauntingly' mid-block, surrounded by buildings, with fewer opportunities and greater constraints;
- a small mid-block site on its own won't work; it should be seen in combination with the adjacent property which is in same ownership;
- development is not offering enough public benefit; should reduce the density and present a more elegant solution;

#### Mid Block Connection

- the mid-block pedestrian connection seems opportunistic and accidental - not aligned, not really a public realm;
- mid-block connection should not detract from streetscape expectations and standards;
- a mid-block space on Vancouver's long blocks is important, and quality, experience, connectivity of that space is more important than quantity;

#### Tower

- tower height is an opportunity for specialness but what we see is the usual contextual literalness rather than architectonics - too much emphasis on neighbourliness - would prefer tower form or 'crystal' to come to the ground;
- tower will add to the skyline with differentiation from Shangri-la, but the relationship of the stone base to the 'glass shard' appeared unresolved; should be more prominence at the street level;
- tower has lots of good elements but needs simplification: bring upper façade down to grade, and façade needs better identify as a green building; lower grid seems ordinary, should be less contextual;
- concern about 55-foot separation to building across the lane;
- concern about footprint and ground plane;
- the location for this tower and the Shangri-la is absurd; would have preferred to see alternatives; the tower base is too predictable; the tower base is ordinary; the stepping of the building should stop earlier, after the first step; all the steps hold the building back from being a tall building;
- the upside-down wedge design and outward flaring doesn't work and is inelegant; it should taper inward, curve, or be straight up, and not go against the laws of perspective; should let the Shangri-La be the tallest;
- a gorgeous curtain wall should be found and taken from the bottom to the top;
- a tall building is a rare opportunity, and this is probably one of the last developable sites available downtown; the objective should be to build the best building for the site;

- the building suffers from not knowing what it wants to be; it should compete with Shangri-la; the scheme should be reworked and perhaps go taller;
- there is an unhappy mix of forms and materials;

#### Open Space

- public open space and garden will be really public only if people use them; sky roof might be seen as hotel/residential amenities rather than public space;
- site is too tight, should have more open space, perhaps through linkage to adjoining Terasen Centre, like Shangri-la plaza; tower needs a better sense of entry and publicness, a more public lobby;
- public access to roof needs to be programmed, with staff above and below;
- wonder if roof garden forest detracts from or contradicts the crystal form; seems to work when enclosed as proposed, but maybe needs further stepping down; one eco-type will be more sustainable - it's a garden not a forest;
- there will be issues of maintenance, design, sustainability (e.g. fertilizer) and access;
- public access, hours of operation and staging will be an issue if roof is to be a very successful public place;
- should be just one elevator from grade to the sky garden;
- concern about publicness of the roof - would prefer a stronger public element at grade;
- the garden at the top is great, but question whether it'll provide an amenity to the public; it's a beautiful space but won't be public enough unless elevator transfers are minimized and a destination provided;
- the street level relationship requires further consideration.

#### Sustainability

- green program is a good start;
- the project should have a thorough sustainability program and should aspire to LEED gold certification in exchange for the extra height and density;
- disagree with the applicant that such and such could be this, or that, or something else - all of these will have impact on form and appearance, and it suggests that sustainability is just an add-on; don't see a serious approach to sustainability;
- would be a great public statement for Vancouver to take an integrated and comprehensive approach; for example, how much glass should you have relative to solar gain, heat loss, etc.; it would be nice to quantify these but it seems a hollow concept here with no overall logic or concept;
- a serious approach to energy reduction and sustainability would be beneficial; the building has good potential;

#### Parking

- parking needs further consideration.

- **Design Panel Summary:**

Chair Adams summarized the Panel's discussion with the concerns being as follow:

- a higher order of public amenity needs to be developed to ensure long lasting public good; this will involve further development of the mid-block entrance, possible opening of the plazas at ground level, and the incorporation of the Terasen building's roof as another public amenity;
- more efficient public roof access should be addressed, with consideration of bringing the roof access to grade by eliminating an elevator transfer;
- provide clarification regarding the sustainability strategy; sustainability should be considered as conceptually integral to the design and not an add-on;
- the development of details regarding the skin of the building is critical;
- the metaphoric or iconic quality of the building needs to be addressed and simplified as there are too many ideas going on;

- architectural excellence has not been achieved;
- there is general support of the use;
- there is general support of the height;
- the development's density and form required further consideration;
- there is general support of the density subject to design refinement.

- **Applicant's Response**

Mr. Whitehead thanked the Panel for the thoughtful inspirations, and acknowledged varying comments presented; the importance of details; that sustainability was not deemed to be a form generator; benefits of seeking the Panel's direction before proceeding further with designs; a reliance on LEED levels as a measure of sustainability; and next steps to include the development of details with expectations of a developed concept.

**2. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at approximately 11:45 a.m.

Q:\Clerical\UDP\Minutes\2005\mar16.doc