

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: March 17, 2004

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Bruce Haden, Chair
Mark Ostry
Larry Adams
Robert Barnes
Jeffrey Corbett (present for 1. and 2. only)
Alan Endall (excused Item 3.)
Steven Keyes
Ronald Lea
Brian Martin

REGRETS: Marta Farevaag
Margot Long
Jennifer Marshall

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1082 Seymour Street
2.	9149 Hudson Street
3.	1155 East Broadway (VCC King Edward Campus)

General Business

The Chair distributed copies of the AIBC's *Advisory Design Panels: Standards for Procedures and Conduct*, for the general interest of non-AIBC Panel members.

Mr. Haden recommended that the Panel be a little more respectful of Panel agenda timelines to avoid meetings running very late and keeping applicants waiting. To this end, he cautioned he will be giving more strict timelines to applicants, Panel members and staff. As well, questions to the applicant and staff will be held until after both presentations have been made.

Mr. Haden reminded the Panel that its primary focus should be on the urban form and public spaces issues, followed by quality of public exterior space and design philosophy, with materials and colours last. At the end of the Panel's advice, the Chair said he will summarize the critical issues that have been identified and Panel members can indicate any disagreement.

1.	Address:	1082 Seymour Street
	DE:	408246
	Use:	Mixed (19 storeys, 181 units)
	Zoning:	DD
	Applicant Status:	Complete
	Architect:	Lawrence Doyle
	Owner:	EL & EL Investments
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Richard Henry, Bob Estey, Larry Doyle, Chris Sterry
	Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this complete application. The site is located at Seymour and Helmcken Streets in the Downtown District (Downtown South) which permits a density of 5.0 FSR. This site is also affected by a view corridor which the proposal works had to accommodate, also setting up a very strong streetwall condition. The proposed use is residential with a small amount of retail at the base. Live/work units are proposed on the lane side and vehicular access is also from the lane. The application seeks a 10 percent heritage density transfer.

The application generally meets or comes very close to the parameters of the zoning regulations and guidelines. Staff consider the overall form has been worked out quite acceptably.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- whether the additional ten percent heritage density can be accommodated on the site;
 - the overall massing resolution of 2-storey townhouses within a 5-storey podium element along Seymour Street, a tower at the corner and a commercial base on Seymour;
 - open space and public realm interface, both the Seymour and Helmcken streetscape;
 - lane treatment;
 - tower expression and its response to the view corridor restriction.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Richard Henry, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and how they dealt with the partial height restriction of 165 ft. to respect the view corridor dissecting the site. He noted the building is designed around a fairly blocky, robust floorplate due to the imposition of the view corridor restriction but to attempt to break up the massing it has been broken down into four quadrants, linked with recesses. The intent is for this to be a background building in its context. The proposal takes advantage of the large roof areas with the incorporation of garden plots for the use of the residents. While they do not intend to seek LEED certification, the proposal aims for environmental sensitivity in terms of energy consumption. Materials include cast-in-place concrete and brick. Chris Sterry briefly described the open space plan, and the applicant team and staff responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Summary of Panel's Key Issues:**
 - Design Development of the Base/Tower relationship;
 - Exploration of a higher feature element or on the rooftop;
 - Consider entry onto Helmcken.
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- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application and highlighted design development issues only.

The Panel was unanimous in its opinion that this project can satisfactorily accommodate the ten percent heritage density transfer. The Panel liked the strong, 5-storey podium base in which this extra density is being absorbed, and thought the podium integrated well with the two-storey townhouses. There was a suggestion that the open balconies on the 5-storey podium may not be well used in this location, with a recommendation to consider some other expression or possibly a French balcony as an alternative to the more typical residential balcony.

The Panel supported the approach that this is a background building. While it was noted the view corridor restriction is resulting in a somewhat bulky tower form, the Panel generally thought the restriction was being handled quite competently. Some Panel members commented that it is a refreshing change from the more typical Downtown South scheme which has a slender tower with a two or three-storey podium.

While the Panel strongly supported the overall approach being taken it was thought that further design development was needed, particularly to the Helmcken Street elevation. There were a number of comments about the curved façade on Helmcken Street and its relationship to the podium. Several Panel members recommended bringing the tower expression to the ground without interception by the straight wall of the podium. Some Panel members commented that they found the concept of breaking the building down into quadrants to reduce its apparent scale quite interesting; however, they were not convinced it was entirely successful, suggesting that further consideration be given to materials and colours to strengthen this idea.

The Panel expressed some disappointment with the treatment of the top of the building and strongly recommended exploring a more dynamic roof expression to counter the general bulkiness of the building. Extra height to the roof element was strongly recommended, and a crisper response to the view corridor. There was also a strong recommendation to consider relocating the building entry to Helmcken Street, directly beneath the roof form.

The Panel strongly supported the inclusion of the garden plots which it thought would be an excellent amenity for the residents and a good selling feature for the development. However, one Panel member questioned the practicality of gardening beds in full shade and recommended further consideration be given to ensuring year-round interest. As well, there was a concern about measures residents might take to discourage birds (netting, etc.) which could have very untidy results. There was also a concern about shadowing on the second floor outdoor amenity space, with a recommendation to bring the seating out to the north edge as far as possible and provide areas for people to congregate.

The Panel strongly supported the greening of the lane. However, there were comments that the edge treatment seems somewhat weak, including the canopy over the vehicular drop-off where the columns look a bit spindly. Increased landscaping on the lane side at the podium level was recommended to help contain that space and provide some screening across the lane.

Other comments and suggestions included:

- increased glazing to the living rooms on the north façade, to take better advantage of the views;
- the Seymour Street elevation could be stronger if the two tower bays were paired, similar to the Helmcken Street expression;

- consider wrapping the podium brick around to the back, and consider brick cladding for the small stair shaft on the podium level vegetable garden;
 - the units where the tower meets the podium (units 210-22, 315-316, 415-416) could be difficult and need further resolution;
 - question whether the size of the suite entries meet accessibility guidelines;
 - the townhouse balconies are quite tight - consider adding small gates for improved security;
 - consider surface texturing on the party wall;
 - the live/work units on the lane seem to be the "poor country cousins" of the development and look a bit like left-over space.
- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Doyle noted that relocating the entry to Helmcken Street is problematic because it would affect the connection between the vehicular drop-off area and the main lobby. With respect to increasing the height of the roof element he noted the view corridor restriction prevents having a full stair at that point. However, he agreed that can look at making that element more of a feature although noted they had deliberately tried not to acknowledge the view corridor in the belief that it has little meaning for most people. Mr. Henry thanked the Panel for the comments and said they will work with Planning to explore as many of the suggestions as possible.

2. Address:	9149 Hudson Street
DE:	407997
Use:	Transit Centre
Zoning:	M-2
Applicant Status:	Complete
Architect:	Cochrane Engineering
Owner:	North Fraser Terminal
Review:	First
Delegation:	Justin Pedley, Sean Kennedy, Ian Hargreaves, Ian McKay, Peter Kreuk
Staff:	Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (1-6)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, presented this application in the M-2 zone which permits industrial uses. The site is located off Southwest Marine Drive next to the Arthur Lang Bridge on the Fraser River waterfront. Neighbouring context includes a mixture of industrial and commercial uses. The proposed Vancouver transit centre use is conditionally permitted and includes service and maintenance facilities, training facilities, administrative offices and parking for diesel and trolley buses.

The proposed building has been located on the site to provide access from Hudson Street. Materials are precast tilt-up concrete panels, corrugated metal cladding, flat metallic silver metal cladding and blue tinted glass. The proposal seeks to achieve LEED certification and incorporates a number of sustainability building design features.

The advice of the Panel is sought, acknowledging that this is an industrial zone but the development of this site is important because it is highly visible as a gateway to the city. The Panel's comments are sought on:

- the overall site planning;
 - design quality of the building;
 - whether a more expressive response to sustainability should be incorporated into the building;
 - soft and hard landscaping treatments.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Ian McKay, Architect, noted the siting of the building is driven by the flow of the buses on the site and the parking and landscaping is located on the city side of the site. The third floor access to the administrative offices via a pedestrian bridge is for safety reasons. A higher quality of finish is proposed on the upper proportions of the building facing the bridge to acknowledge that most of the view of this site is from the bridge. Windows are oriented to the south to take advantage of river views. The proposal will seek LEED silver certification. Peter Kreuk, Landscape Architect, briefly reviewed the landscape plan.

The applicant team and staff responded to the Panel's questions.

- **Summary of Panel's Key Issues:**
 - Consider relocation of building to river side of property;
 - Design development with respect to large asphalt area and perimeter;
 - Consider possible addition of planting, quality lighting and/or paving patterns;
 - Enhance roof treatment from both a sustainability and aesthetic point of view.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel did not support this application, having concerns about the overall site planning and the relationship of the building to the Fraser River. The Panel was also concerned about how the proposal deals with the "sea of asphalt" on the site. As well, a stronger response to sustainability was recommended. A comment was made that while Translink necessarily needs to ensure appropriate use of public funding, in a project such as this it is also incumbent on the organization to address issues of public amenity.

The Panel had no concerns about the architectural expression of the building which it generally found handsome and interesting. There were some concerns at a detail level, including recommendations for further design development to the windows and doors as well as the location of entrances.

The Panel was quite disappointed with the site plan and the way the project turns its back on the river. The Panel also expressed some frustration with the lack of information as to how this proposed site plan was determined and said it would have been helpful to have seen how the project team arrived at its conclusions. There were concerns expressed that this centre will be the first vision of Vancouver for visitors to the city. It was noted that the site will be a sea of trolley wires, buses and asphalt and in this respect it was strongly recommended that the model reflect this reality. A comment was made that the trolley wires could be used to advantage by integrating them into the overall site planning in some way to help mitigate negative view impacts. There were suggestions to locate the building closer to the river with car parking in front, and this parking area could have a permeable surface to deal with ground water in a sustainable way. The Panel acknowledged that there may be operational requirements that are driving the current site plan but thought that, from an urban design point of view, the building should be closer to the river's edge.

One Panel member suggested the site should be bigger in order to provide some relief to the expanse of asphalt by providing some meaningful landscaped areas to break it up. This would go a long way to making the site less industrial and oppressive. Another Panel member commented that, although the proposed use is permitted in this zone, this is a difficult site to have chosen for this facility. Some Panel members also expressed disappointment that the proposal fails to take advantage of potential public amenity at the river's edge, noting the efforts made in recent years to provide pedestrian connections along the area's waterfronts. This is particularly important for a LEED certified project. Others commented that rather than attempting to hide the site, it should perhaps be celebrated more by providing some relief to the asphalt in the way it is treated (patterning and colour) as well as in the arrangement of the wires and poles. It was stressed that lighting will be an important consideration in dealing with the asphalt areas.

The applicant was commended for the proposal to seek LEED silver certification for this project. However, the Panel thought a lot more could be done to strongly indicate that this is a sustainable development. In addition to providing permeable paving wherever possible and increasing the amount of landscaping, particular attention should be given to the roof treatment. Suggestions were made to consider integrated solar panels to harvest electricity, making a connection to the function of the building and acknowledging how the buses are powered. It was suggested that the large roof area provided an opportunity to make a larger gesture towards sustainability. Consideration should also be given to its appearance in terms of overlook.

Other comments and suggestions included:

- the overhead walkway entry looks like a good solution on paper but might present problems;
- the linear parking lot could be broken up more with tree islands;

- the roof deck next to the cafeteria should be on the west side of the building;
 - the front entry is a long way from the public pedestrian connection to Hudson Street;
 - the use of the building should be celebrated more and not screened as much;
 - suggest swapping the hedge along 75th Avenue and the deciduous trees in front of the bus bays, opening up some of the site from 75th and screening the bus bays;
 - the hedging seems a bit relentless and needs to be broken up with different types of materials;
 - the site does not need as much screening as shown, especially on the front edge
 - the security fence along Hudson Street could be something other than chain link;
 - the relationship with the ancillary buildings could be stronger.
- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. McKay noted that orienting the building to the water side is problematic due to poor soil conditions. Mr. Pedley agreed they could put some material together to show how they arrived at this scheme, noting there were extensive workshop discussions with all the user groups to arrive at the most efficient layout for the movement of the buses.

3. Address:	1155 East Broadway (VCC King Edward Campus)
Use:	School
Zoning:	CD-1
Applicant Status:	WORKSHOP
Architect:	Stantec
Owner:	Vancouver Community College
Review:	First
Delegation:	Peter Wreglesworth, Rainer Fassler, Geoff Hull
Staff:	Tom Phipps, Anita Molaro

WORKSHOP

Tom Phipps, Central Area Planner, introduced this workshop discussion. A policy and site planning process is now underway which will lead to formulation of a framework for a rezoning application providing for several stages of expansion on this site. Current development on the site reflects past decisions to respect views to the north from Broadway and the park across the street, and to respect relationships to adjacent multi family districts to the east and west. There are also objectives for internal linkages, circulation and views out of the site, and provision of space for student assembly. The Panel's advice is sought on principals and conceptual directions. This input, together with that from the public, will help to generate viable directions for the rezoning application.

The Development Planner, Anita Molaro, briefly reviewed the site context and noted that Planning is working towards establishing urban design principles for this site. Considerations include the massing, density, height, the scale of the building as it relates to the residential neighbourhood, and preservation of views. 7th Avenue has been identified as a pedestrian and bike route and there will also be a new community centre nearby.

Rainer Fassler, Architect, briefly reviewed the analysis of the issues under consideration for this site. General discussion followed.

The issues for consideration were summarized as follows:

- principles and conceptual directions;
- overall density;
- building height and location of the massing, particularly in phase three;
- whether it is important to respect to the existing view corridor from an urban design point of view;
- crossing on 7th Avenue;
- Broadway covered court;
- how to create a sense of campus;
- public access.

Following are some of the Panel's comments:

Principles and Overall Concept:

- All the right issues are being addressed;
- No problem with the first phase - the massing is appropriate;
- Support the "campus making" piece in the first phase to improve permeability;
- The overall image of the campus needs to be addressed;
- The schemes with more exterior open space are more desirable;

- The opportunities that have been identified are a good start but it is not clear how each of them is being achieved, e.g., repair of the existing building which is essential, both on Broadway and internally;
- The first building block will be significant;
- Maximizing the advantage of the slope is not evident, other than the sloped spine;
- Connections to other campuses is critical where there could be sharing of resources;
- A lot of work has gone into the planning to date and the proponents are to be commended for identifying all the issues;
- Not sure the campus-making exercise needs open plazas and open space to make it successful and in this urban environment it should not be a priority;
- There is opportunity of a sloping site such as this to include above grade linkages;
- The sloping site creates some opportunities that may not yet have been fully explored;
- This facility would be better served in another location rather than this site which is surrounded by residential; it's not the right strategy for long term considerations;
- This is a great start at looking at what is obviously a very complex design problem;
- Hope this comes back to the Panel for another workshop review prior to review of the formal rezoning application;
- Strongly support the goal to achieve a campus environment;
- The challenge is to achieve a campus environment on a fairly tight site compared to UBC or SFU campuses; the Downtown universities are not campuses and this should not be a primary goal for this site;
- Don't think it has gone far enough in terms of massing to present a concept; the health sciences and auto trades facilities are defining the massing of those particular components but the rest is just looking at height - it seems like there is a bit of a disconnect between the second and final phases because the programming is ill-defined at this point;
- It would be great to see a total massing concept in which the health sciences and auto trades facilities are incorporated but with a legible form;
- The concept of incremental growth is good but you are dealing with such density that you need to form and mold what that massing will be rather than just letting it happen incrementally; in terms of design guidelines we will have to be fairly specific - the final built-out will be much more precise;
- Very pleased with the direction this is taking;
- With respect to circulation, the spine is interesting but it might be worth exploring schemes with greater depth;
- The question of a campus feel is interesting but what exactly kind of campus is it? the core challenge is that it is an urban campus in a location which is not particularly urban.

Height and Density:

- With respect to the overall density, greater height should be explored;
- By the time we reach the third phase, it is too dense - still need to be convinced about the overall density;
- The taller massing should go on the east side of the site;
- There has to be greater height to achieve the density being discussed;
- 2.8 FSR can be achieved on this site but not with view corridors and large amounts of open space at grade;
- Regarding the heights of the buildings, my concern would be that there needs to be a broad decision made about where we want the visible height of buildings in the city noting currently there are no taller buildings around there; I would be comfortable with something that was a slightly higher single icon of the institution (not necessarily on Broadway) but not to have a large number of taller buildings.

Broadway Frontage:

- The Broadway frontage must be addressed;
- With respect to the historic view corridor from Broadway, it is probably more important to address the urban design issues along Broadway;
- Don't understand the rationale for the view corridor from Broadway;
- Broadway presence is important and there is no indication it has been achieved;
- It is critical to get more scale on Broadway;
- Not convinced by the historical view corridor;
- Linkages through the campus should have a higher priority than preservation of the view corridor from Broadway;
- Is there a possibility of building over the existing building on Broadway to relieve pressure on the lower ends and edges of the site?
- The view corridor does not have to be maintained at the same level but the idea of an exception to a consistent streetwall along Broadway might be an opportunity; I would be satisfied if there was a single great public space with a view rather than a panorama;

7th Avenue:

- The overhead connection on 7th Avenue might be appropriate to make it more pedestrian friendly;
- 7th Avenue really bisects this campus and it would be preferable to remove vehicular traffic from this route; otherwise every effort should be made to calm the traffic as much as possible;
- 7th Avenue is a complicating factor for achieving the campus-like environment; closure rather than calming would be preferable;
- 7th Avenue is not a busy street in this location so I see no problem with at-grade crossings - an overhead crossing could detract from animation at street level.

Gt. Northern Way:

- Breaking up the massing on Gt. Northern Way makes sense for some variety on the street;
- Avoid creating a canyon on Gt. Northern Way;
- With respect to Phase 3, the massing at Gt. Northern Way in relation to the park will be important;
- The taller massing on Gt. Northern Way should be similar to what is developed on the other side;

Streetscape/Neighbouring Development:

- Neighbouring development is very residential in character so street animation should be compatible with the residential neighbours;
- Keith Drive is a very odd edge to the campus and needs to be strengthened if it is to be a major connection;
- Streetscape and neighbourhood are important and are not addressed by any of the massing models;
- The streetwall and how it relates to the community and the campus needs more attention; there might be opportunity for fairly significant streetwalls at the edge providing the uses are there - possibly uses other than campus uses could help animate the streetwall - an urban edge;
- An interesting condition is a characteristic of China Creek Park with has a strong sense of enclosure on the westerly edge - phase three might also consider the park as a piece of urban design;
- The connections to the Finning lands and the future Skytrain station are very important and will transform the way we think about that space;
- The height and the unbroken streetwalls are too imposing and feel like they are bad neighbours to surrounding developments;

- With respect to the edge, I have some concerns about the completely internalized spine; an institution which has community values at its heart needs to make sure there is an exterior link; it doesn't all have to be publicly accessible but to offer glimpses into the auto trade facility, for example.

Peter Wreglesworth thanked the Panel for its input. He agreed it is a very complex site with many issues to be addressed, and confirmed it is their intention to bring the proposal back for another workshop with the Panel.