
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: March 20, 2002

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Jeffrey Corbett
Gerry Eckford
Richard Henry
Reena Lazar
Stuart Lyon
Kim Perry
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terris

REGRETS: Helen Besharat
Joseph Hruda
Maurice Pez

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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| 1. WORKSHOP: Pacific Boulevard Redesign |
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1. WORKSHOP:	Pacific Boulevard Redesign
Applicant:	Planning & Engineering
Owner:	City of Vancouver
Review:	First
Staff:	Michael Gordon/Lon Laclaire

Michael Gordon, Senior Planner, introduced this workshop to review the proposed redesign of Pacific Boulevard, between the Cambie Bridge on-ramp and the Burrard Bridge. He noted this is the first time a street design proposal has been presented to the Urban Design Panel. Phase two of the project will consider Pacific Boulevard further to the east when Concord Pacific brings forward its rezoning applications. It was stressed that this is a "work in progress". The intent is that schematic drawings and cross sections will be finalized in April 2002.

Council recognized that a number of facilities were being considered for Pacific Boulevard, including street car and bicycle routes. The major issues with respect to the boulevard, which was built to suburban standards before Expo86, include:

- street trees;
- the width of the street, particularly the very wide pedestrian crossings at Drake, Davie and Cambie Streets;
- the traffic is too fast;
- animation of the "high street" area;
- the need to encourage people to move around the downtown in modes other than private vehicles.

In response to these concerns, Council authorized a study to redesign the street, with Alan Jacobs (author of "Great Streets") as consultant. Three generic alternatives emerged from the study: Central Median; Multiway Boulevard; and Flexibility Amenity Zone. These alternatives were assessed, also taking into account the utilities. Mr. Gordon briefly reviewed the urban design analysis that was carried out.

Lon Laclaire, Engineering Services, reviewed the options in greater detail, noting the Central Median is emerging as the preferred option. This option also contains elements of the Multiway Boulevard option.

Panel comments/questions during the general discussion that followed, included:

- will it be possible to achieve a definable character and consistent "read" of Pacific Boulevard?
 - the central median option seems the simplest and easiest to manage;
 - not convinced the space provided in the median is a place where pedestrians would want to spend any time because it is between busy traffic, there are shopping sidewalks on either side and the seawall is not far away;
 - if you lead people away from the edges into the centre median it takes the energy away from the edges;
 - the multiway boulevard concept is very attractive: its achievement of the functional objectives far outweighs the aesthetics. It combines the two different types of traffic that are using the street in a friendly way;
 - much will depend on whether or not there will be a street car and how it will function;
 - support the retrofitting of the boulevard to make it work better and calm the traffic;
 - there is a need to bring down the scale of the street;
 - the central median option maintains the status quo in terms of the scale of the street;
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- the best option would achieve the greatest narrowing of the street and adding that space to the sidewalks;
- the scale of the trees will make the place;
- a benefit of the flexible amenity zone is that it allows the sidewalk to be widened which will improve the pedestrian crossings;
- the wider sidewalks would allow for larger outdoor restaurant seating areas;
- if the scale is reduced it could become a major destination shopping street;
- the lack of action on sidewalk relates to the types of businesses that are there; something should be done to make it a more attractive place for a restaurant;
- the flexible amenity zone could allow for commercial activities, such as ticket booths and flower vendors, onto the sidewalk;
- the fronting 12 ft. of the sidewalk could be claimed by the retailers and allow them to determine the design;
- the multiway option might actually encourage fast moving traffic down the middle and not improve the street experience;
- the multiway option is very attractive and this could be the only opportunity to do it in Vancouver;
- would there be the possibility of closing off one of the multi ways for special events?
- the central median option might not have enough room for covered shelters at streetcar stops;
- the main reason for the central median option would be for a specific use, such as the streetcar;
- was consideration given to bikeways completely segregated from traffic?
- interested in an option which attracts people who are not currently bicycle commuters;
- this area is currently poorly served by transit;
- an attraction of the central median concept is that creates a legible marker. This could also be achieved with the flexible amenity option by way of a beefed-up linear park that is an adjunct to the sidewalk;
- not supportive of having the streetcar running down the middle - it is more logical for it to be next to the sidewalk;
- too much has been concentrated on the bike route;
- mature trees on the central median will obstruct visibility on the curves;
- suggest wider sidewalks, two rows of trees at the edge of the sidewalk and a designated bike lane in between;
- hope it doesn't get too "bitty" given it is not a very long run for a grand boulevard; if it doesn't read as a consistent character it might lose the impact of improving the street;
- the multiway solution, while initially attractive, would be an oddity in the city;
- maybe this could be an opportunity to pick up more on the city grid and use other elements, such as street furnishing, tree species, etc., to create a distinct character;
- suggest having an urban artist try to superimpose the grid on the city at the intersections to make them legible to the public;
- a better approach might be not to adhere to one option but look for the right solution for each section of the street.

In general, the Panel thought this was a great start. The Panel was very pleased to see this proposal and suggested that more civic projects be brought forward in the future.

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