
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: March 22, 2000

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chamber, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Roger Hughes [Deputy Chair]
Patricia Campbell [retired: March 22, 2000]
Sheldon Chandler [retired: March 22, 2000]
Per Christoffersen
Paul Grant [New Chair]
Sean McEwan [retired: March 22, 2000]
Keith Ross
Norman Shearing [retired: March 22, 2000]

Lance Berelowitz [new Panel Member]
Sorin Tatomir [new Panel Member]
Jack Lutsky [new Panel Member]

REGRETS: J. Hruda (Chair) [retired: March 22, 2000]
J. Cheng [retired: March 22, 2000]
G. Raynard

ACTING RECORDING

SECRETARY: M. Penner

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 1028 Nelson Street
2. WORKSHOP - 980/990 Station Street

1. Address:	1028 Nelson Street
DA:	DE404744
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Hyland Turnkey Ltd.
Owner:	Trustee St. Andrew-Wesley Congregate United Church of Canada
Review:	Second
Delegation:	John Kinney, Cliff Korman, Jane Durante
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: [5 - 2] - Support

- **Introduction:**

The Development Planner, Ralph Segal, introduced this revised proposal [initial submission presented February 9, 2000]. Although the Panel supported the height and density at that time, they had concerns regarding the relationship of the proposed tower to the Church; as well as the project's relationship to the neighbouring 6-storey building to the west and issues of the scale on Nelson Street.

Mr. Segal advised the density was only approximately 60% of capacity in the DD, 6.0 FSR zone, and that the height would be 200 ft in a 300 ft zone. He further referred to a model which showed the applicant's scheme in its previous position, and referred to the many issues and concerns raised by neighbours in the 6-storey building to the west, as well as some of the other residents in the surrounding content. In response, the applicant had shifted the tower 5 m east towards Burrard Street, basically for greater separation, view and outlook.

He went on to explain that the Panel had been concerned in the previous review about some of the heritage issues in terms of the relationship along Nelson Street, and the tower as a backdrop to the Church, as seen from Burrard Street.

Mr. Segal referred to the revised model and posted plans and stated he would be specifically looking for the Panel's feedback on progress that had been made in terms of streetscape relationship along Nelson Street, whether impacts of this project on this 6-storey building to the west had been satisfactorily addressed, and the viewing aspects of the proposal as a backdrop from Burrard Street.

Panel Member questioned the Heritage Commission's response to this project.

The Heritage Planner, Gerry McGeough, advised their response had been that they approved of the the pavilion connection between the Church and the proposed tower - were looking for a consistent base treatment to tie into the horizontal line of the Church and maybe additional piers; were looking for a mid-rise section that would tie into the 6-storey to the west. Also, referred to the expression of the top to the proposed tower which would address the three tiers within the community.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:**

In response to the previous comments from the Panel, Mr. Kinney explained how the back of the tower had been brought forward; the relationship of the 6-storey building had been reviewed and now proposed a 5 m grid spatial separation of 25 m at closest point. That the tower corners had been double-clipped, and the shadow line had been moved 22 ft. back, [before the building had been on the DD property line]. He

advised in order to maintain a consistent line of the Church, they had used piers as a stone face back wall of the townhouses, to create harmony in the elevation tying the Church to the tower.

He next addressed the views from Burrard Street with the tower as a backdrop; they had incorporated stepped terraces, moved elevator machinery to the right-hand corner [north], shifting it in the same direction as the Church. They had attempted to simplify the design in revisiting the Nelson Street facade and opted for more transparency along that elevation. He also stressed that the walkway between the project's townhouses and the neighbouring 6-storey building would be kept private with a gate at either end of the walkway.

Ms. Jane Durante commented that the townhouse patios had been reduced to front porches and that existing vegetation at the Church, its parking lot and underground garage had been pulled back 3 m to ensure the survival of the trees along Nelson Street.

A Panel Member enquired about CPTED issues at the proposed entrance way to the tower off the lane; the applicant advised that the canopied entrance off the lane would serve as an active zone, also stressed that the activity rooms, fitness centres, etc. would all face the lane, providing extra views of the lane by passers-by.

Another member enquired about the renaissance stone material on the piers neutral tone brick faces and the balcony to be glazed in green glass. The applicant confirmed metal finishing in the existing church and the main lobby - panels would be placed only at the slab lines - and would not affect the neutral tones, spandrel colours or brick in the mid-rise.

The Church representative gave a dissertation about the Church's mission statement.

An enquiry was made regarding subdivision as these were 2 separate parcels and was advised that a single-site covenant would tie the 2 parcels together.

Panel Members raised the issue of 7,500 sq. ft. floor plate, suggested slimming the tower down and going higher which would decrease the floor plate, bringing it more in line around the 6,500 sq. ft. size.

The Panel referred to the developer's proposed FSR which would leave 40% FSR on the table. The applicant stated that this would be a comfortable sized development for the Church to undertake, given the value of the property and the size of the building, and that it also fitted their economic program.

The Panel asked Mr. Segal about the reason the full FSR was not being pursued here and were informed that it would be preferred to leave this issue open for a possible future discussion about heritage banking [the Church was designated a heritage building some 30-35 years ago].

The Chair drew the Panel's attention to the following issues: location, FSR, height, tower location, massing, size of the floor plate and direction of the shape of the massing, tower backdrop and proximity of the 6-storey building to the west of the site.

- **Panel's Comments:**

The majority of the Panel stressed the obvious architectural difficulties of this project and were aware of the work involved in addressing the many strong issues, yet were pleased with the vast improvements made since the last meeting. There was favourable commentary about the improved elevation along Nelson Street and most Members approved of the proposed materials as it related to some of the existing masonry.

There were positive comments about the landscaping, the layering and ground floor treatment of the tower, as well as the colour palette. It was also evident that much emphasis had been placed on pleasing the neighbourhood with improved landscaping and widening the space from the westerly 6-storey building.

However, all had difficulty with the floor plate size. There were mixed comments about the back drop issue, i.e., the proposed tower to the rear of the existing historical church - some pro, others against and some were of the opinion

that this tower would give the Church a positive dominance on the streetscape. All promoted a slimmer tower; perhaps simplifying the design, showing more of a distinction between the glassy tower and the heritage Church with less articulation, and felt the top of the tower needed to be re-thought. It was also suggested that the masonry be closer to the top of the tower, providing a better link with the Church, rather than the proposed “ribbons” of masonry coming up from the base and floating into thin air.

The Chair reiterated the Members’ general support of the project at this time; thought the adjustments to the tower setback and better situation were well received. He agreed the floor plate was too large and that perhaps a stronger, simpler architectural design would be more fitting. The Chair also noted that the top of the proposed tower was too busy competing with the Church; realized the approach to the heritage building was still an issue but felt it had been well handled around the base and suggested perhaps some simplification, and improvement on proposed materials in the lane be considered.”

- **Applicant’s Response:**

The Applicant appreciated Panels comments; stated they had looked carefully at the “push and pull” of the proposed development since their last appearance before the Panel and felt had made adhered to a good number of previous suggestions, but kept in mind the Church’s surround - with specific emphasis on not pulling the base forward too much so as to disturb the mature trees along Nelson Street. Though the Panel’s positive comments regarding the top of the tower were interesting and could be incorporated. He also referred to the full articulation along Nelson Street and the neighbouring community, noting it had not been a simple design to reach - that a considerable amount of time had been expended in slimming the elements down and identifying clean elements of the components, etc.

The Panel voted and the Chair advised the Applicant they had the support of the Panel.

2. Address:	980/990 Station Street
Use:	High Tech Industrial
Zoning:	I-3
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Musson Cattell MacKey
Owner:	Schroeder Properties
Review:	Second
Delegations:	Mark Whitehead, Margot Long, Larry Sunderland [Schroeder Properties Ltd.]
Staff:	Ralph Segal, Scot Hein

EVALUATION: n/a WORKSHOP

- **Introduction:**

The Development Planner, Scot Hein, introduced the Schroeder proposal site. He advised that a preliminary application would be submitted in the near future and briefly reiterated issues and advice from the January 12, 2000 Workshop.

Mr. Hein provided an overview of I-3 zoning, noting an FSR of 3.0 and an outright height of 60 ft. which is relaxable of 100 ft. The previous Workshop in January focussed on big issue including the siting of buildings, street orientation and general massing. At the previous Workshop advice had been given to consider both historical patterns, as well as a more grand Parisian-like approach. Panel Members were looking for further development of these ideas, with greater clarity. Staff had held discussions with the applicant about street patterns, pedestrian paths, the Strathcona community, Thornton Park, Lafarge and the train station to the south. The Panel had indicated that the applicant should not be restrained by the street grid, but should respect the edges with respect to existing street patterns. The extent of public amenities that would be provided remained unclear. The site will be comprised of quadrants, with a central boulevard and intersection cross lanes as view “slots” a separation device of the proposed buildings. These slots will provide loading and service areas. The boulevard will be characterized by active retail at grade. The massing of the periphery is low with greater massing at the centre of the site, noting that the proposed development will be underbuilt with regard to the 3.0 FSR available.

- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:**

Mr. Whitehead referred to the previous Workshop which had focussed on the street grid system. He acknowledged that access to Station and Prior Streets and the need for one more north-south and east-west street was important. He discussed the possibility of using Gore Street as the most prominent with the possibility of bringing Gore Street into the site, becoming the main east-west street which would make the most obvious pedestrian connection and the Strathcona community, ALRT station, and Thornton Park use would assure good movement through the site. He noted that a future pedestrian path to the site via Lafarge Street would require the establishment of a route through the existing buildings and noted that the current pedestrian crossing, between two major traffic lights, was at Main and Terminal Streets.

The preferred scheme would orient the central boulevard to the city in an east-west alignment which would provide for a good pedestrian connection for users and residents. This option would concentrate massing in the middle in order to create a friendlier edge to the developments around it and minimize shadow impacts. Five storey buildings are proposed around the perimeter in order to focus the massing to the centre. Mr. Whitehead demonstrated how the city grid is extended through the site and takes advantage of the east-west grid. Another focus would be the extension of National Street. City Gate was

acknowledged for promoting an urban form which they anticipate extending with the development of this site.

He advised that Gore Street, which runs north-south, would be more service oriented, incorporating parking and loading. He proposed that north-south lanes would be the point of entry for parking and loading and would not minimize impact on green space and public realm. Proposed courtyards would be active with a variety of eateries, retail, business areas, work-out facilities, meeting places, etc. - all with easy access from the exterior.

Ms. Margo Long emphasized continuation of the established urban grid which also served as a template used for the open space pattern and the proposed urban quality. She referred to further planned work regarding street development with future linkage to the SkyTrain station and Strathcona Park. Ms. Long reviewed the proposed landscaping including tree systems and proposed character of the grand boulevard.

It is also anticipated that the precinct will remain active at night life. Sustainability and ecological aspects have been considered.

Mr. Whitehead confirmed that the proposed courtyard space would be private for office users with potential public retrofit.

The Panel Members reviewed the models and posted materials.

- **Panel's Questions/Comments - Applicant's Responses:**

In answer to a question from the Panel concerning parking, the presence of contaminated soil and the proposed treatment for the latter, Mr. Whitehead advised that there would be 4 separate parking garages, each garage would have two ramps, as well as street parking. With reference to the contaminated soil, he confirmed this would be removed.

A Panel Member referred to the history attached to the existing railway station, and thought it would be appropriate to see a railway motif incorporated somewhere into the project, as it was a prominent landmark in the site location. Mr. Whitehead advised that they wanted these buildings to be more modern which would exclude a rail motif; Yaletown had gone with more brick - reflecting its industrial area, and they had opted for a grid system as it was felt this would be quite strong and would suit the I-3 zoning. He did indicate that a historical reference could be reflected in the landscaping.

Several members voiced concern about the possibility of the proposed development not fully coming to fruition, and related concerns about the completion of courtyards.

Mr. Whitehead was asked whether a consultant had reviewed vehicle management at the main intersection as none of it was particularly pedestrian friendly. He confirmed that consultants had reviewed this aspect and felt it to be a workable intersection noting that the actual traffic count was not high. Cul-de-sacs would be available for emergency vehicles.

Several Members enquired whether any long-term consideration had been given that this area would become more public than presently anticipated, as well as the flexible nature of the development in that there could be a demand for more retail space than anticipated.

- **Panel's Summations**

The Panel felt this development would help to preserve the sense of importance and context of this area

and generally thought it was a successful transition. The architectural challenge was recognized. Some members thought this was an important piece of a much larger emerging context and urged staff to develop the overall plan as soon as possible. The initiative will change False Creek flats and could set the tone for future concepts of this type of development. Massing was supported while some felt the height of the buildings closest to the courtyard could be higher with terraces towards the outer edge of the development.

Others viewed the proposal as an improved pedestrian experience. Positive comments were heard about the proposed parking scheme and felt this site was an excellent choice for this project.

The social issues in this neighbourhood were raised with the acknowledgement that Thornton Park desperately needed work and improving the neighbourhood and park via this project could yield positive results.

CityGate was referenced as a built form influence for the area and efforts should be made to tie together the surrounding area, including Thornton Park. The Panel referred to early 20th century woodframe houses in Strathcona and noted the challenge to reconcile this older residential area with the proposal. A suggestion was made to give this site a more welcoming edge by angling/slanting the south-west courtyard access for a more welcoming public gesture.

Most of the Panel supported the diversity of the courtyards design. Suggestions were also made regarding the development of different building types.

Concerns were voiced about the grid and its orientation, and that further thought should be given to the proposed street layout. Some felt that higher massing would be essential, and had trouble with the large floorplates. There was a unanimous feeling that the courtyard should be larger, and that grand boulevard didn't appear to have any certain direction of purpose.

Although the Panel found favour with this project, there was doubt expressed about how this type of concept would fare in the future and the City would monitor the phasing to achieve diversity on the site.

- **Applicant's Response**

Mr. Whitehead expressed appreciation for the Panels comments and suggestions and that they had more work ahead of them.