

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: March 26, 2008

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
John Wall, Chair
Maurice Pez
Douglas Watts
Richard Henry
Martin Nielsen
Mark Ostry (Excused Item #1)
Gerry Eckford
Bob Ransford

REGRETS: Walter Francl
Bill Harrison
Albert Bicol
Tom Bunting

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	999 Seymour Street
2.	701 West Georgia Street

BUSINESS MEETING

Mr. Wall gave a brief overview of the applications previously seen by the Panel that were presented to the Development Permit Board on Tuesday. Chair Wall called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. The Panel considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 999 Seymour Street
DE: 411857
Description: 21-storey retail/office/residential building.
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Acton Ostry Architects
Owner: Townline 999 Seymour Ltd.
Review: Second (following rezoning)
Delegation: Mark Ostry, Acton Ostry Architects
Peter Kreuk, Durante Kreuk Landscape Architects
Staff: Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, noted that the proposal was coming to the Panel for the second time after the rezoning. The proposal was supported at the rezoning. There is an increase in density from the 5 FSR up to 5.5 FSR with a Heritage Density Transfer to take it to 9.6 FSR including 2 FSR of commercial.

Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Mark Ostry, Architect, further described the proposal. Mr. Ostry gave an overview of the first principles of the design with respect to the land use and urban design rationale. He noted that a lot of effort had gone into the podium to minimize shadow on the outdoor open space. They are also creating a distinction between the residential component and the commercial. The amenity for the residential is on the third floor with a generous outdoor space and becomes a buffer between the residential and the commercial.

Peter Kreuk, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans noting that there will be a generous setback in the public realm. A second row of trees are planned along with benches and a change in the pavement. The amenity space on the third floor has a water feature and an outdoor kitchen.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

The Panel had no substantial concerns with this proposal.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the project noting that it was a wonderfully designed building and a very strong project.

The Panel thought there was a level of continuity from the rezoning and the major issues had been carefully considered and resolved. They also thought livability was strong and

well expressed in the building and as well the integration between the commercial and residential was well resolved.

The Panel also liked the massing on the street and said they looked forward to seeing the project built. They also liked the use of workable solar shades on the SW façade and liked the way light will be brought into the units on the northwest side of the building. The Panel liked the treatment of the materials and the way each façade responds differently to its solar orientation and its neighbouring city context. They thought the building would be interesting at different times of the day.

There was some minor criticism regarding the length of travel between the two elevators and one Panel member thought the use of colour ended abruptly at the top of the tower and suggested further design development for the louvers at the penthouse level. A couple of Panel members thought more ideation could be given to the two patios with paving materials and lighting that relate to the architecture. Also, one Panel member encouraged the applicant to consider some sustainable landscape strategies and to use water cisterns to capture rain water which could be used for irrigation. One Panel member thought the entry lobby would benefit from having more access to natural light and suggested the roof could be glazed to bring in more light. One panel member suggested further consideration of the scale and material richness of the building at the pedestrian level. Another panel member while acknowledging the architectural distinctiveness of the NE façade commented that it could use some carefully placed vision windows to help further animate the façade and allow for views to the north.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Ostry thanked the Panel for their great comments and thought they would be able to incorporate them into the project.

2. Address:	701 West Georgia Street
DE:	411749
Description:	Addition to Pacific Centre to replace the rotunda and public plaza with a two storey addition for retail use.
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Abbarch Architecture Inc.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Jeremy Woolf, Abbarch Architecture Inc. Ralph Giannone, Giannone Associates Finley McEwen, Cadillac Fairview Corporation
Staff:	Dale Morgan/Phil Mondor

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-7)

- **Introduction:** Dale Morgan, Development Planner introduced the proposal for the redevelopment of the south-west corner of the Pacific Centre Mall located at West Georgia and Howe Streets involving the demolition of the existing rotunda structure filling in the public plaza and replacing it with two floors of retail space. Cadillac Fairview initiated a rezoning in 2005 to consolidate blocks 32, 42 and 52 and to allow for the Canada Line Station on the north east corner of Block 52. Mr. Morgan noted that the infill needs to be a high quality development that will set the standard along West Georgia Street. The major tenant in the new addition is not supportive of open display windows along the street. A small CRU is planned along West Georgia Street between the street and the main tenant. The proposal will be using a number of high quality materials. The roof has been designed with a metal skin to look like the sleeve of a jacket with pleated seams. In terms of the public realm treatment, there are some constraints because of the mall below ground and the traffic lay-by.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

1. **Siting and Form:** The proposed addition to the Pacific Centre is sited at an important downtown corner with frontage along Vancouver's ceremonial West Georgia Street. Its neighbours include the Vancouver Art Gallery, Hotel Vancouver, Hotel Georgia, several commercial towers, and the future Canada Line Station. Considering the relationship to its special context, comments are requested on the building's siting and general form.
2. **Materiality and Expression:** Is the material expression of high quality and well handled? Further comments are requested on the roof treatment and overlook considerations from adjacent taller buildings.
3. **Public Realm:** The design guidelines for West Georgia Street and the related downtown precinct call for an expanded public realm with landscape amenity and an active retail frontage that provide pedestrian interest and visual connectivity to and from the street. Given the site constraints that include below grade structure directly under the street, existing vertical shafts and elevator chases, the lay-by along West Georgia Street that narrows the sidewalk and tenancy requirements; has enough be done for public realm?

Phil Mondor, Rezoning Planner gave an overview of the rezoning for the site.

Mr. Morgan and Mr. Mondor took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Jeremy Woolf, Architect, further described the project noting that he was involved in the rezoning. The current plaza is not well used and

his client, Cadillac Fairview has decided to fully develop the site. Mr. Woolf said he was aware of the Georgia Street guidelines and that it will be impossible to include any street trees as the mall extends under Georgia Street and there is not enough soil depth. Also, the lay-by could not be moved as it would destroy the waterproofing membrane over the mall roof. He added that the membrane is already in a fragile state.

Ralph Giannone, Architect, noted that the plaza is on a significant corner surrounded by significant buildings. They are allowing for an architectural expression that deals with the urban complexities by using a metal fabric that is draped over the structure to create a dynamic form. The structure rises to the corner of Howe Street and West Georgia Street and will include a canopy, vision glass, art glass and doors into the mall.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to improve the relationship between the Howe Street façade, adjacent public realm and the entrance to the Four Seasons Hotel;
 - Design development to clarify the hierarchy of retail entrances on West Georgia Street and to achieve greater prominence for the Pacific Centre Mall entry;
 - Provide a design rationale and a landscape plan showing the proposed public realm treatment as required by the rezoning; and
 - Design development to provide additional public realm enhancements, in lieu of the removed public realm amenities.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support the proposal. However, the Panel did acknowledge the complexity of the problems that are associated with the site and also the quality of the work that had been presented in terms of an architectural solution and the high quality of materials and details. The Panel agreed that it was a challenging project.

Special attention was drawn to condition (iv) of the rezoning:

Design development should seek to retain some open space and provide some interior public space, and provide these in a way which is integrated seamlessly with the adjoining public realm:

***Note to Applicant:** The public realm should encourage public interaction and gathering, lending significance to these corner sites and be well integrated with the surrounding streets and sidewalks. Provision of detailed drawings is required of proposed landscaping, including paving materials, planting, street furniture, and lighting.*

The Panel did not have a problem with infilling the plaza or with the addition of prominent retail space on the corner as the plaza had not performed well over time. They noted that the corner of Howe Street and West Georgia Street is one of the most important corners in the city and didn't feel that the proposal met the condition of retaining some open space connected to interior public space and no landscape plan was provided. They were also concerned with the public realm interface along Howe Street and the project's compromised relationship to the Four Seasons Hotel as the design will limit the visibility and access of the hotel lobby from West Georgia Street.

(Note to Applicant: It is typical to provide a design rationale explaining how the project meets the conditions of the rezoning. An analysis comparing the proposed deleted public realm amenities with the new amenities would clarify how this requirement is being met.)

The Panel had some concern with the edge of the building being up against the street and the loss of public realm. They noted that West Georgia Street is Vancouver's primary ceremonial street and has a formal rhythm that should be respected. The proposal with the scale of the surrounding buildings breaks away from that rhythm. The Panel noted that the Hotel Georgia is being renovated and a new tower built on Howe Street that will again change the corner. The Panel thought the proposal should respect the way neighbouring prominent buildings like the Art Gallery, Hotel Vancouver, Cathedral Place address West Georgia Street by having a formal relation to the street edge and that it should not bend around the lay-by. They felt the project needed a stronger and more respectful response to West Georgia Street with some public realm enhancements.

(Note to Applicant: context photos with views to the site, a clear site plan showing adjacent properties and public spaces, and running street elevation of West Georgia Street should be provided as part of the Urban Design Panel Submission.)

The panel generally supported the large stone window frame elements, the folded roof form and the high quality materials. Most of the Panel did not have a problem with the tenant using louvers in the windows rather than displays as they thought that down the road it would have the potential for being a transparent store front. Several Panel members were concerned that the tenant seemed to be dictating the design. They thought this was a short term solution tailored to a particular retailer who may at some time in the future vacate the premises. Right now the design seems to be a bill board for the main tenant and is not an appropriate gesture for the site.

The Panel thought the building expression on the corner of West Georgia and Howe Streets looked confusing. The corner entrance to the small CRU is more prominent than the entrance to the mall with the tall glass element, and in language is saying that it was the front door to the building. The panel thought the mall entrance should be more prominent and have a significant presence and expression on West Georgia Street. The Panel thought the proposal was not the right response for this corner and although they thought it was a good idea to bring the retail to the street they felt the form of design should better reflect the hierarchy or importance of the retail spaces and their associated entrances.

One of the major components of the rezoning was the condition about the project enhancing the public realm and the Panel was concerned that this had been overlooked by the applicant. They thought it was important from a public point of view that the public realm was a positive experience. They agreed that there are other responses to landscaping in the public realm and suggested the use of water features which will not require much depth and will engage the public. Several members of the Panel thought there outdoor seating should be provided.

The Panel were in support for the material selection but the major concern was around context and urban fit.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Giannone said he appreciated the Panel's comments and thanked them for acknowledging that they are working with a challenging site and a complicated design. He noted that they are trying to make the retail program work and would like to have more transparency on the street. He added that wanted to be straight forward with the Panel regarding the louvers in the windows. Mr. Finley said that they would take another look at the mall entrance and the Howe Street façade.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.