
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: March 7, 2001

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room #1, City Hall

PRESENT: **MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:**

Tom Bunting, Chair
Paul Grant
Lance Berelowitz
James Cheng
Alan Endall
Bruce Hemstock
Roger Hughes
Brian Palmquist
Gilbert
Keith Ross
Sorin Tatomir

NEW MEMBERS: **(Non-Voting this meeting)**

Jeffrey Corbett
Gerry Eckford
Walter Francl
Richard Henry
Joseph Hruda (did not participate due to conflict of interest)
Maurice Pez

REGRETS: Jack Lutsky

RECORDING
SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
--------------------------------	--

1.	VGH Precinct - Open Space
----	---------------------------

-
- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1. Address: | VGH Precinct (Open Space) |
| Use: | Mixed |
| Zoning: | CD-1 |
| Application Status: | Rezoning |
| Architect: | Davidson Yuen Simpson |
| Owner: | Vancouver General Hospital |
| Review: | Third |
| Delegation: | David Simpson, Mark Betteridge, Don Vaughan |
| Staff: | Ralph Segal, Tom Phipps |
-

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)

- **Introduction:** Tom Phipps, Central Area Planner, introduced this application. The Panel last saw the VGH expansion proposal in July 2000 when the initial submission for rezoning the precinct was unanimously supported. However, at that time, the Panel asked that the project be returned for further review in order to assess the response to its comments and advice. As well, staff seek the Panel's opinion on how well the proposal is progressing in the development of a public realm that is commensurate with the site's regional stature. It is a major employment centre and a major focal point in the region, requiring a significant public open space, linked in a series of pedestrian corridors. The overall pedestrian realm will be much more important than in many other areas of the region. It must link the neighbourhood to Broadway, and allow people to circulate within the precinct in a way that encourages movement on foot rather than by car, given the limited amount of vehicular traffic that can be accommodated.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, sought the Panel's comments on the main open space which is envisioned as the forecourt to the Heather Pavilion, with a retail corridor along its edge. He briefly reviewed the open space plan and identified the locations of the various buildings on the site. The Panel then assembled around the model for a more detailed description of the project. Mr. Segal noted that staff are quite pleased with how the open space concept has evolved.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Don Vaughan, Landscape Architect, noted the precinct has the character of a campus, with the buildings in a park setting. He reviewed the streetscape study, noting the emphasis has been on this being a wellness centre, providing accessibility for everyone.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this rezoning application and commended the applicant for imposing a good sense of order on the whole scheme. The precinct has a wonderful campus feel, and a very nice pedestrian public realm.

The Panel was pleased to see the retention of the Heather Pavilion and that it will be a focal point of the green space. The Panel agreed that the central green space is a very important element in the whole scheme, and the edges around that space are the most important spaces to deal with. The green space itself will be more of a visual resource, providing an opportunity for visitors to get their bearings in the precinct.

A suggestion made by one Panel member and endorsed by several others, was to consider using the ordering of the trees to reinforce the boundaries around and within the precinct in terms of species and colour, perhaps using the rows of trees in a much more overt way to provide an additional means of reading the spaces. In combination with the paving, the trees could be used to reinforce pedestrian nodes, crossings, seating areas, etc. Careful attention should be given to the major

patient users of the site by providing appropriate paving surfaces and planning the street crossings and street alignments.

The Panel stressed the importance of the commercial component and recommended a comprehensive commercial plan to reinforce the commercial use as an integral part of the village green concept. The scale of the commercial façades will need to be very sympathetic to the Heather Pavilion which is very small and fine scale for an institutional building. Careful attention will need to be given to how the built edges meet the ground and the relationship to both the hard and soft landscaping. One Panel member commented that the four medical buildings that are aligned along Willow seem to have very awkward, narrow gaps between them, whereas the earlier precinct studies showed larger floor plates. He questioned whether the applicant had explored consolidating the floor plates, perhaps with some demising walls so that they could be developed in a phased way.

The Panel agreed the 11th Avenue east-west pedestrian spine is a very important aspect of the scheme. Canopies for weather protection were strongly recommended to reinforce this route and to make sure it is well used. One Panel member also recommended that allowance be made for the future realignment of the dog-leg portion of 11th Avenue once the building at Ash and 11th is redeveloped, to more demonstrably link the north City Square east-west connector.

Several Panel members commented on the east-west edge of 12th Avenue, including the suggestion that it may have been over-emphasized as the entry through the village to the green space. The nature of 12th Avenue as a fairly busy vehicular route needs to be addressed, both in terms of creating a different edge to the site and mitigating the traffic impacts, but also along the south edge of the green space.

It was felt the arrival nodes and spines from Broadway need greater attention given their existing and future importance as the front pedestrian door to the whole site. 10th Avenue should not be overlooked because it will become an important street, particularly when rapid transit is in place and the connections from Broadway become even more important, with stations likely to be at Broadway/Cambie and Broadway/Oak.

A number of comments were made about the existing hospital buildings and their presence in the scheme. The new biotech buildings face nicely onto the large open space but block most of the existing hospital buildings and disconnect the hospital patient area. It was suggested a way be found to emphasize the importance of the hospital in the precinct and not make it subordinate to the commercial biotech facilities.

One Panel member encouraged the applicant to consider the rooftops as part of the open space realm. If not necessarily directly public, they would be of value to the patients.

An observation was made that little is mentioned in the design about the patients. The applicant was urged to consider the fact that people will be coming here to be healed and to address the psychological benefit of landscape in the healing process.

The importance of way-finding on the campus was stressed and the applicant was encouraged to consider people arriving at this campus by car and trying to locate buildings. Clearly identifying the parking will be very important. One Panel member thought the vehicle access to the parkade conflicted with the pedestrian character of the overall campus.

- **Applicant's Response:** David Simpson, Architect, thanked the Panel for the very constructive and helpful comments.

