

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: May 12, 2004

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Mark Ostry, Chair
Robert Barnes
Alan Endall
Marta Farevaag
Steven Keyes
Ronald Lea
Margot Long
Jennifer Marshall
Brian Martin

REGRETS: Bruce Haden
Larry Adams
Jeffrey Corbett

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	3704-3720 Welwyn Street
2.	640 West 6th Avenue
3.	1701 West Broadway
4.	6450 Clarendon Street

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| 1. Address: | 3704-3720 Welwyn Street |
| Use: | Residential |
| Zoning: | CD-1 |
| Applicant Status: | Rezoning |
| Architect: | Stuart Howard |
| Owner: | Mosaic Avenue Lands |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Stuart Howard, Robert McCarthy |
| Staff: | Dale Morgan, Alan Duncan |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-1)

- **Introduction:** Alan Duncan, Rezoning Planner, introduced this application for rezoning from RS-2 to CD-1 to permit the development of 60 ground-oriented townhouses. The site consists of eight parcels and a full half block of Welwyn Street extending south of 20th Avenue to the lane north of 22nd Avenue. The site has a frontage of 592 ft. and a depth of 119 ft. (72,500 sq.ft. - approx. 1.5 acres). The site slopes down about 8 ft. from Welwyn to the lane to the east. The site accommodates a telecommunications service building and an associated 100 ft. telecommunications tower which will remain on the site. The surrounding area is zoned RS-2 which allows single family dwellings with a maximum density of 0.6 FSR and up to 0.7 FSR for multiple or infill housing. To the east directly across the north-south lane is the Cedar Cottage MC-1 area which allows a mix of uses including residential, commercial and light industrial up to a discretionary 2.5 FSR and a maximum height of 40 ft., relaxable to 45 ft. The site is subject to the Cedar Cottage MC-1 Welwyn Street Plan Policies adopted in 1996 and is also within the 1998 Kensington-Cedar Cottage Community Vision. Both these policies support the proposed use and form of development. The proposal also includes a pedestrian connection through the site, between 20th and 22nd Avenues, offered as a public benefit for the rezoning.

The Development Planner, Dale Morgan, reviewed the relevant policies and the proposed form of development. Each of the 2- and 3-bedroom townhouses (average 1,300 sq.ft.) has one enclosed parking stall, accessed from the lane. Engineering Services has agreed to the proposed parking. The requested 1.2 FSR meets the policy goal of providing ground oriented residential in the range of 0.6 - 1.2 FSR. Policies also call for provision of a sensitive transition between the MC-1 and RS-2 zones, landscaped front yards with individual entries, and to limit impacts from the nearby commercial industrial uses. A cross-site pedestrian connection linking 21st Avenue to Commercial Street is also recommended.

The townhouses are arranged in four row house clusters organized around pedestrian courtyards, 36 ft. in width. The centre courtyard is 58 ft. wide and includes the public pedestrian connection. The pedestrian courtyards are gated and accessed from Welwyn Street only. The auto courts (28 ft. wide) are located between the courtyards and are accessed from the lane. The telecommunications service building is located beneath the central courtyard, taking advantage of the change in grade. Following a brief description of the form of development, Mr. Morgan noted the following areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought:

- Whether the density and form of development are appropriate for the site;
 - Whether the Welwyn elevations sufficiently address the need to break down the scale into smaller single family patterns and provide variety and diversity of building forms;
 - Whether the pedestrian connection works functionally as well as in terms of good urban design;
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- Whether the position and visibility of the telecommunications tower is adequately resolved;
 - Whether the proposal successfully mitigates any potential impact of the lane relative to the mixed industrial use;
 - The width of the driveway court relative to the height.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Stuart Howard, Architect, briefly described the design rationale, noting the goal was to break the buildings down into recognizable forms from the street side. The slope of the site lends itself to the proposed parking arrangement and allows entry to the basement level of the individual townhomes, accessed from the lane. The pedestrian courtyards have been elevated to be level with Welwyn Street and the driveway courts have been sunken to the level of the lane. This arrangement also affords views through the site. The high wall on the lane allows for planting to soften the lanescape. Mr. Howard explained that they have tried to incorporate the telecommunications tower into the building façade.

Staff and the applicant responded to questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Comments:**

Summary of Panel's Key Issues

- General support for the form of development. The Panel requests that the application be returned to the Panel at the development application stage. At that time the Panel will look for additional contextual information and analysis as well as a complete landscape plan;
- Mixed response regarding the Welwyn Street elevation but some agreement on the need for increased variety and differentiation, including the possibility of entrances on the street;
- The pedestrian connection is not convincing as a public benefit. Additional detailed development of the connections and transitions of the courtyard link at the street and lane would be helpful;
- Consider the cross-sectional qualities of the public spaces, possibly depressing the courtyards and creating more private open space.

The Panel strongly supported this application and considered the proposed ground oriented family housing to be very appropriate in this location. A comment was made that providing one parking space per unit is also a positive contribution to the scheme. While at the top end of the recommended density for the site, the Panel considered the requested 1.2 FSR to be acceptable given the site has little constraint. One Panel member thought more contextual analysis should have been provided to corroborate that livability issues are adequately addressed at the maximum density. Another suggestion was to explore breaking up the rows of 7 townhouses by eliminating or setting back the centre unit.

The Panel had no concerns about how the telecommunications tower has been incorporated into the scheme. One suggestion was to consider celebrating it more rather than treating it as a negative, and another was to use it as a space marker for navigation within the community.

The Panel generally found the scale of the Welwyn Street elevation sufficiently broken down to achieve the appearance of single family houses. However, there was a strong

recommendation from the Panel to incorporate greater variety into the façade, differentiating the units and lessening the appearance of a single development. There was a comment that in the absence of detailed contextual information the architectural character being suggested seems somewhat arbitrary. Another Panel member found the appearance quite heavy, with the massive wing walls contributing to this effect. Further study was recommended with respect to shadowing on the courtyards. As well, although a very traditional form has been chosen, it was recommended that some of the details should make it obvious that it is a contemporary building. Some Panel members also recommended incorporating secondary entries on the Welwyn frontage to provide a better relationship to the street and the neighbours opposite.

The Panel was unanimous in the opinion that the public connection through the site is not a convincing public benefit as proposed. It appears to be very private and unwelcoming, exacerbated by the narrow gateway on Welwyn Street and with no sight line through the site. The Panel thought it could work, functionally, and recommended a much stronger announcement of its public nature. There was also a concern that the walkway is unnecessarily close to the fronts of the houses. The main concern was with the constrained connection at the lane due to the grade difference and the narrow stair. It was recommended more thought be given to making it much less pinched and more inclusive of the lane.

The Panel generally found the lane to be well treated and an appropriate transition to the neighbouring light industrial uses. Some design development of the wall was recommended for pedestrian interest, including the possibility of introducing more windows at the lower level on the lane elevation.

The Panel considered the 28 ft. width of the driveway courts to be adequate. There were recommendations to consider developing it in a way that encourages children's play, noting the trees and trellises shown may detract from this objective. Including doors onto the driveway courtyards was also recommended. There was also a recommendation to stagger the garages to ensure there is enough room for two people to wash their vehicles at the same time.

With respect to the 36 ft. courtyards, there was a suggestion to consider providing individual private space and a shared courtyard. The size and caliper of the trees need to be sufficient to ensure a good level of privacy.

One Panel member was concerned that the level of detail provided on the landscape plan is much less than that provided on the architecture, with insufficient information to demonstrate whether the courtyards will be successful.

- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to the public access through the site, Mr. Howard noted the lane is currently very unfriendly and as yet it is unknown how the adjacent MC-1 site will be developed. He agreed they can look at diversifying the appearance on the Welwyn frontage, including varying the brick colour. There are front entrances and windows facing Welwyn and these can be strengthened. Both the landscaped courtyards and the driveway courtyards are intentionally designed to create mini neighbourhoods within the project, with 14 families sharing one common area and driveway. Mr. Howard advised they did look at a number of different ways to orient the units. Rob McCarthy added, they believe the project will be a catalyst for improving the whole neighbourhood.

2. Address:	640 West 6th Avenue
DE:	408320
Use:	Residential
Zoning:	FM-1
Applicant Status:	Complete
Architect:	Davidson Yuen Simpson
Owner:	648 West Sixth Developments
Review:	First
Delegation:	Dane Jensen, Gerry Eckford, Dick Stout
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application in the Fairview Slopes FM-1 zone, on West 6th Avenue between Heather and Pine Streets. The application is for an all residential project at the maximum conditional density of 1.5 FSR. The Ivies development is directly across the lane to the south. View glimpses through the site from West 7th Avenue to the north have been achieved. Staff generally support the proposed layout, with some further improvements. Items for the Panel's consideration include:
 - The guideline recommendation to articulate buildings over 30 m in length and achieve greater emphasis of the entry;
 - Whether there could be some relief in the length of the courtyard;
 - The 5 ft. setback at the west end of the site, in particular the massing of the southern portion of the building and its proximity to its neighbour;
 - Paired vs. single entries on 6th Avenue; the use of brick on 6th Avenue; lane landscaping;
 - Roof deck access.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Dane Jensen, Architect, briefly reviewed the design rationale. He noted they have met with the neighbours and have attempted to address their concerns. Gerry Eckford described the landscape plan and the applicant team and Development Planner responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:**

Summary of Panel's Key Issues

- With respect to the guideline recommendation for greater articulation of the length on 6th Avenue, there was unanimous support for greater emphasis at the main entrance; also suggestions for deleting the unit above the entry or articulating it differently;
 - Further consideration should be given to the southwest corner to achieve a more neighbourly relationship with the heritage buildings on Heather Street, including increased landscaping;
 - Strong recommendation for more landscaping at the lane;
 - Concerns about the livability of the southernmost units.
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The Panel supported this application with a number of suggestions for improvement.

The Panel found the 6th Avenue façade in need of greater articulation and softening, especially around the entry. Greater emphasis of the entry was strongly recommended. There was some concern expressed about the livability of the unit above the entry. One Panel member recommended deleting the centre unit; others thought more articulation and lightening, possibly eliminating the balcony on the courtyard side to improve light penetration, would be sufficient.

The paired entries on 6th Avenue were supported and found to be quite appropriate in this location because they allow for more landscaping. Additional street trees on 6th Avenue were recommended.

In general, the Panel strongly favours roof decks and recommended as many as possible on this project as long as there is no existing view to be protected. There were no concerns about overlook from The Ivies. Partial screening on the roof decks was recommended as a means of discouraging potential full screening in the future.

The Panel generally found the lane treatment to have less integrity than the rest of the project and recommended further design development. Additional planting in the lane was strongly recommended.

The Panel acknowledged the 22 ft. wide courtyard is somewhat tight, but it was considered to be acceptable and workable in this urban location. Removing as much clutter as possible was recommended to improve its appearance and make it more livable. A concern was expressed that the deep cornice on the courtyard side will limit daylight access. While building envelope issues were acknowledged, it was recommended that this cornice be eliminated or reduced as much as possible.

Concerns were expressed about the quality of the units at the rear and the lack of stepping to create an adequate deck. Livability of some of the living areas in these units appears to be compromised. There was a recommendation to incorporate skylights to maximize the amount of natural light into these units.

The Panel thought the relationship with the heritage houses on Heather Street could be improved. Suggestions included a greater setback, additional landscaping and greening of the wall.

The Panel had no concerns about the choice of materials.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Jensen thanked the Panel for the suggestions, most of which will make for a better project. He noted the centre unit off 6th Avenue has been the subject of some discussion and this will be pursued further. He acknowledged that the southwest unit and the rear elevation need more work. Mr. Stout added he appreciated the Panel's input regarding the roof decks, noting the relationship with the Ivies' roof decks has been the subject of some discussion.

3. Address:	1701 West Broadway
DE:	408326
Use:	Commercial
Zoning:	C-3A
Applicant Status:	Complete
Architect:	J.K. Sproule
Owner:	677005 BC Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Mark Chevalier, Keith Koroluk, John Sproule
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-3)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application to renovate an existing building and add a floor for amenity space for the Georgia Straight newspaper who will own and occupy the building. The existing FSR is just under 1.5 and will increase to approximately 1.8 FSR. Outright density in the C-3A zone is 1.0 FSR, relaxable to a maximum of 3.0 FSR. Given this is an existing building and a small addition, existing non-conformities are factored into the assessment of the project, noting that residential use would typically be encouraged in this location. The proposed continuation of the commercial use is supported. The proposed height of the building is between 50 and 60 ft. Outright height in C-3A is 30 ft., relaxable to an unspecified maximum. The guidelines for this sub area suggest 70 ft. At the lane, the existing surface parking is being replaced with partial underground parking and a landscaped setback is proposed. A 10 ft. dedication of the lane will also be achieved.

The Panel is asked to comment on how this application earns the requested height and density. The Panel's advice on the proposed colour scheme is also requested.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mark Chevalier, Architect, reviewed the design rationale and Keith Koroluk reviewed the landscape plan. Staff and the applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:**

Summary of Panel's Key Issues

- Landscape: Consideration for a tree on Broadway and the lane;
- The Panel felt strongly that there needs to be more respect for the modern heritage quality of the existing building.

The Panel supported this application and thought it earned the height and density being sought. The addition of the amenity space on the roof was strongly supported.

The Panel strongly supported the re-use of this existing commercial building and thought there were good improvements being made to the streetscape, particularly on Pine Street. A comment was made that this project has the potential to be very significant in terms of bringing 60's modernist buildings into the 21st century. However, several Panel members thought the proposed renovations and addition incorporated too many ideas. The applicant was urged to simplify it considerably and to respect the integrity of the existing building.

The Panel generally thought the roof was more complex than it needs to be. A continuous roof form was recommended as opposed to the gull wing form indicated which has the effect of diminishing the rigour of the building below.

Most Panel members had no problem with the colour scheme. One suggestion was to include a splash of colour in the signage. Other comments were that it is very tonally dull which makes it appear more monolithic than necessary. Painted brick is not recommended.

The Panel strongly recommended using the rainwater off the roof for irrigation, and to consider using pavers in the rear parking area to make it more of a courtyard. A comment was also made that it might be especially appropriate for the Georgia Straight to emphasize sustainability in its new headquarters given it has traditionally represented an alternative view in the city.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Chevalier noted the Panel's advice is very consistent. He noted there has been some discussion with the client with respect to the colour scheme and he agreed it can be further reviewed. He confirmed they will be happy to pursue adding more street trees, both on West Broadway and the lane. Mr. Sproule added the Panel's comments will be taken into consideration.

4. Address:	6450 Clarendon Street
DE:	408349
Use:	Seniors Congregate Housing
Zoning:	CD-1
Applicant Status:	Complete
Architect:	Lloyd Plishka
Owner:	First Baptist Housing Society of BC
Review:	First
Delegation:	Lloyd Plishka, Howard Johnson, Randall Sharp
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-3)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Mary Beth Rondeau, presented this application, previously reviewed by the Panel at the rezoning stage. At that time, the Panel strongly supported the general layout of the site and requested the application to be returned for review at the development application stage. The proposal is to add two buildings to an existing seniors housing complex, one for funded assisted living housing (Clarendon Court) and one for market rental congregate housing (Shannon Oaks West). Ms. Rondeau briefly reviewed the areas of concern for the Panel at the rezoning stage. Items for the Panel's consideration on this submission include:

- the overall quality of Shannon Oaks West compared with Clarendon Court;
- landscape treatment at the lane;
- location of the garbage;
- issues around entry and drop-off and orientation for the residents.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Lloyd Plishka, Architect, noted that both buildings are for rental accommodation, one market and one non-market. With respect to a previous concern of the Panel about the adequacy of the internal corridor in Shannon Oaks West, Mr. Plishka said they believe the width is sufficient to accommodate food delivery services to Clarendon Court and traffic congestion will be minimal. As well, the periods of activity for the two buildings are not concurrent. With respect to the massing, Mr. Plishka explained the roof is now a mansard roof form with a three-storey expression at the ends of the buildings with four storeys between. Windows have been grouped with collective bays which reinforce verticality, and corner windows have been introduced. He stressed that the same materials will be used for both buildings; the only differentiation will be the colour. Randall Sharp briefly described the landscape plan, and the applicant team and Development Planner responded to the Panel's questions.

- **Panel's Comments:**

Summary of Panel's Key Issues

- Site circulation, sense of arrival and articulation of the entry should be improved;
- There could be more consistency in the level of quality in both buildings (e.g., windows and articulation).

The Panel supported this application and recognized the need for the facility to be built as soon as possible to respond to the demand for quality seniors' housing. The Panel also acknowledged the improvements made to the scheme since the rezoning stage.

The Panel remained somewhat concerned about the overall site organization and circulation and would have found it helpful if the model was more complete and included the existing buildings on the site. There were concerns about the multiple entry points which could be confusing for wayfinding for the residents.

Several Panel members still found that Clarendon Court lacked the overall quality of Shannon Oaks West. Some of the comments included:

- Every entry and drop-off is different (from a different location and a different relationship to the internal circulation);
- The windows on both buildings should be the same;
- Clarendon Court looks institutional and does not take full advantage of potential northerly views;
- Clarendon Court has the poorer site, which is reflected in the lack of a grand entrance and its exposure to the lane;
- Clarendon Court does not have the same level of articulation as Shannon Oaks West; the colours are also less sophisticated on Clarendon Court;
- Clarendon Court falls short in its sense of entry and the HandiDart drop-off in the lane next to the garbage is very undignified;
- A sense of entry and wayfinding is very important for seniors;
- The form of the Clarendon Court entry should return to a cruciform, making the entry gesture much larger;
- The entry and drop-off for Clarendon Court should be combined.

The Panel had no major concerns with the landscape treatment of the lane, except there was a strong recommendation to relocate the garbage and the HandiDart drop-off.

Other comments about the landscape plan included:

- While it is obviously heavily and well landscaped there is not much definition to it; the new landscape seems somewhat scattered;
- The paths are not very clear and there is only one seating area;
- The landscape design is haphazard - the forms of the additional landscaping on this site should be tightened up and contribute to wayfinding.

The corridor width was generally found to be acceptable, and there was a recommendation to make the corridor linkage more transparent.

One Panel member questioned the location of the elevator at the north end of Shannon Oaks West. Consideration for additional ventilation to deal with flood odours in the main floor of Shannon Oaks was also suggested.

- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to site circulation, Mr. Plishka noted there is a tension between two ambitions: clarity and variety. The existing building has a strong statement of entry but it also has a number of other possibilities for movement and circulation. It works very well but may be being interpreted as being confusing. He agreed there could be improvement in the sense of entry to Clarendon Court. The difference between the two buildings has come from the strength of the Shannon Oaks West gables which could not be repeated on Clarendon Court because of height restrictions. However, it can still be improved. Some work is also necessary with respect to the location of the garbage. Howard Johnson noted that Clarendon Court needs to meet the requirements of BC Housing as well as to be affordable.