
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: May 14, 2003

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Helen Besharat, Chair
Bruce Haden
Reena Lazar
Brian Martin
Kim Perry (excused Item #2)
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss (except Item #4)
Jennifer Marshall
Eva Lee (except Item #1)

REGRETS: Stuart Lyon
Jeffrey Corbett
Mark Ostry

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	651 Expo Boulevard (Costco)
2.	7000 Mont Royal Square (Champlain Heights)
3.	5868 Fraser Street
4.	5605 Dunbar Street

Business

Helen Besharat reported on the Development Permit Board meeting of May 12, 2003.

Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, briefly reviewed the process for the benefit of the newer Panel members, in response to some questions that were raised at the last meeting.

- applications are typically not forwarded to the Development Permit Board (for development applications) or Council (for rezoning applications) without the support of the Panel. A non-support vote therefore requires the application to be returned to the Panel;
- the Development Permit Board and City Council regard the Urban Design Panel's input very highly. Minutes of the Panel meetings are included in reports to the Board and Council;
- when voting on applications, Panel members must make a judgment as to whether they believe their recommendations can be addressed in prior-to conditions;
- because the UDP Chair is also a member of the Development Permit Board Advisory Panel, the Panel's opinion is made clear when the Board considers applications. The UDP Chair can request amendments and additions if it is felt the Panel's commentary is not adequately reflected in the conditions;
- it is important for the Panel to take into account decisions that have been made in rezoning applications when they reach development application stage. Issues such as form of development are a given, having already been approved by Council, and should not be revisited.

Panel's comments:

- it is difficult to support an application when the fundamental premise of the rezoning is questioned;
- it would be helpful for the Panel to get an overview of the overall planning for an area to get a better understanding of the City's objectives;
- applicants should not be at the whim of each Panel which must accept the conclusions of previous Panel members and subsequent decisions made by Council;
- the planners' presentations to the Panel should make clear what has already been predetermined in terms of form of development issues.

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1. Address: 651 Expo Boulevard (Costco)
DA: 407454
Use: Mixed (4 towers, 22-33s)
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Architect: James K.M. Cheng
Owner: Concord Pacific Developments
Review: Second
Delegation: James Cheng, Peter Webb, Joe Frye
Staff: Jonathan Barrett, Phil Mondor
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Jonathan Barrett, began by providing an overview of the Official Development Plan for False Creek North and the changes made subsequently, primarily converting previously approved commercial use to residential. The principal of extending the city grid and meeting the viaducts was agreed to in principle. It was noted that a number of inquiries have been received with respect to the Plaza of Nations, and the long-term potential for BC Place Stadium is likely to be an extension of residential/commercial uses. A strong pedestrian route is anticipated from the Georgia Viaduct down to grade at Pacific Boulevard and False Creek. Phil Mondor, Rezoning Planning, added that recently a number of inquiries have been made about converting some of the older heritage type commercial buildings in this area to residential use. It was noted the viaducts are likely to remain in place for at least 25 years. A tram route is proposed along Pacific Boulevard and the Panel will be invited to provide comments on it in due course.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** James Cheng, Architect, pointed out there were a couple of workshops held last year with the previous Urban Design Panel on the whole False Creek North area when some of the principles were endorsed. These included the alignment of Smithe Street and establishing a pedestrian link directly to the water, and normalizing the intersection with the ramp and bringing a successful texture and urban design of the Quayside Neighbourhood into this area. Studies were also conducted around calming Pacific and Expo Boulevards. Much of this work has been suspended due to the Pavco's subsequent withdrawal from the discussions.

Mr. Cheng briefly reviewed the revisions made to the scheme since the Panel's last review and non-support on April 30, 2003. These include:

- the previous 9 units per floor has been reduced to 8 units per floor;
- floor plates of towers A and C have been reduced by more than 400 sq.ft. and now comply with the floor plates approved at rezoning;
- tower width has been reduced from 105 ft. to 85 ft.;
- tower separation has been increased to at least 80 ft.;
- townhouses have been added to the base of Tower A facing the internal cul-de-sac;
- colour has been introduced to accentuate Towers A and C.

Ground plane changes have not been made but will be addressed in the final stage of design development.

The intent is that the two corner buildings will be stronger, signature towers with the other two towers being more contextual, background buildings.

Mr. Cheng noted the question of the appropriateness of locating townhouses on Georgia viaduct was raised at the rezoning stage. Acoustic and marketing studies concluded that this end of Georgia is no different than at the entry to Stanley Park in terms of livability issues. It is also felt to be more important to extend the street and make it less of a freeway by introducing residential and trying to anticipate the evolving neighbourhood. This was endorsed by the previous Panel and City Council. Peter Webb, Concord Pacific Developments, added, the intent is that on the busy streets the townhouses will be two-storey loft units (live/work) with bedrooms at the back.

Joseph Frye briefly reviewed the landscape plan and the design team responded to questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this submission and congratulated the applicant on responding so quickly to the Panel's previous comments. The Panel also found the Development Planner's explanation of the overall design intent for the neighbourhood to be very helpful in terms of understanding what is trying to be achieved on this site.

The Panel unanimously supported the towers' revised dimensions and expression. It was agreed the taller, slimmer tower forms are preferable. One Panel member thought even greater height would be acceptable.

Most Panel members liked the introduction of colour to the two corner towers and encouraged further development of this idea. One Panel member suggested extending colour to the other two towers as well, as a means of tying them together, but others preferred the differentiation.

One Panel member found the scale of the roof elements too small.

Given that this site will be much less of a signature site in the long term it was thought that the treatment of the massing and the townhouses works quite well to blend into the grid and the larger neighbourhood. A comment was made that the proposed live/work use goes a long way to mitigate concerns about livability for the townhouses along Georgia Street.

The efforts to tame this end of Georgia Street were strongly supported by the Panel. One Panel member recommended further study on the public realm aspects, noting that this project provides a good opportunity to create a special transition block - narrowing the surface carriageway, for example.

Some concern was raised about the space at the edge of the new escarpment. It is not clear whether it is public or private, and it seems a bit like left over space. It was suggested that further thought be given to taking full advantage of the opportunity that exists at this edge.

Some Panel members suggested the internal streets should have a better quality paving material than the asphalt currently shown.

Concerns were raised about the long term durability of the proposed painted concrete. A more integral and durable material was recommended.

Comments were made that improvement is needed to the east elevation of Costco to make it a more interesting space, particularly at night. Suggestions included incorporating back-lit advertisements.

Some Panel members prefaced their remarks by expressing continuing discomfort with the direction established by the rezoning. There was concern about the relationship between this site and International Village to the north, and the fact that this site remains somewhat disconnected from the neighbourhood below.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cheng thanked the Panel for the good comments, particularly about the creation of the upper and lower environments and the space beneath the viaducts which he said they have already started working on. The facade treatment will also be reviewed further before they proceed to the Development Permit Board.

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2. Address: 7000 Mont Royal Square (Champlain Heights)
DA: 407381
Use: Residential
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Burrowes Huggins
Owner: PC1 Palladium Projects
Review: Second
Delegation: Mike Huggins, Andy Croft, Tom Norton, Kim Perry
Staff: Eric Fiss
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Eric Fiss, Development Planner, noted the Panel did not support this application when it was reviewed on April 16, 2003. This submission responds to the concerns raised by the Panel.

Mr. Fiss briefly reviewed the history of the entire development site, noting this phase was part of the preliminary application that was endorsed by the Development Permit Board and City Council. At that time (1999), staff considered the proposal met typical standards used elsewhere in the city at comparable densities with respect to: form of development, the siting and scale of the buildings, relationship to adjacent developments, the amount of open space, and residential livability. Of particular merit was the provision of family accommodation in townhouse clusters, with the central park providing a high quality of amenity for the residents.

Staff have no major issues with the current submission, beyond some finetuning adjustments that can be addressed in prior-to conditions. Mr. Fiss briefly reviewed how this submission responds to the Panel's previous concerns:

- the 54th Avenue elevation, which was generally supported by the Panel, remains largely unchanged with the exception of some simplification of the roof forms;
- landscape design along the greenway has been improved to provide better surveillance;
- separation between building 5 and neighbouring buildings has been increased to about 25.5 ft.;
- the building width has been reduced to about 90 ft.;
- the interior corner of the L-shaped apartment building has been pulled back to bring more light into the corner unit;
- the amenity room has been enlarged and the lobby slightly reduced;
- staff consider the building character is consistent with original approved form of development but some adjustments have been made by simplifying some of the roof forms;
- with respect to livability, many of the stacked units have been revised to include a proper entrance area with a hall closet;
- concerns of overlook and privacy will be addressed in landscaping prior-to conditions;
- the original form of development anticipated a fairly large underground parking area, segregated in two zones.

In general, staff consider the form of development conforms with what was approved in principle at the preliminary stage.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mike Huggins, Architect, said he believes a number of improvements have been made since the last review. He briefly reviewed the revisions and responded to the Panel's questions. Kim Perry briefly described the adjustments made to the landscape plan.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this submission and appreciated the applicant's positive response to the Panel's previous concerns.

The Panel noted improvements in site navigation but still found it somewhat attenuated for visitors to the site. It was also acknowledged that there may be few options given the overall development. With respect to way-finding, a Panel member suggested making a community project for members to select the signage for the site.

Some Panel members noted the improvement to Building 5 which gives the project a little more breathing space as well as facilitating navigation.

Some concerns remained with respect to Building 6, particularly the apartments in the inner corner of the L shape. While the cutting back of the roof was appreciated, this remains a dark corner. There was also a question about the floor plan of the corner units which could benefit from more space, and a concern about entries opening directly into kitchens. It was noted that many of the A units have limited glazing, which might warrant further review. The direct outside access to the ground floor units was strongly supported.

With respect to landscaping, a recommendation was made to eliminate the 4 ft. fence to improve neighbourliness. There was also a concern about the width of the greenway and its long term maintenance. Everything possible should be done to encourage residents to take ownership of this space, otherwise it could become a no man's land.

A suggestion was made to consider changing the vinyl siding to something more in keeping with the rest of the materials.

Some Panel members recommended that the Planning Department conduct a full review of this project after it is completed, to determine whether this is the type of building the City wishes to encourage other developers to replicate. One Panel member thought there was an issue around site coverage rather than density.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Huggins thanked the Panel for the constructive comments.

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3. Address: 5868 Fraser Street
DA: 407449
Use: Mixed
Zoning: C-2
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Kenneth King
Owner: Jagmohan Pabla
Review: First
Delegation: Ken King
Staff: Eric Fiss
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Eric Fiss, Development Planner, introduced this application for a modest C-2 proposal on Fraser Street between 41st and 43rd Avenues. At 1.9 FSR, the application does not seek the maximum permitted floor area and is below the maximum height limit. The application proposes a 3-storey building with retail on the ground floor and six residential units above, accessed by elevator from a 20 ft. wide courtyard above the retail. The rear units have some private outdoor space in decks at the lane and the front facing units have some open space in the courtyard.

Staff have no major issues and note the proposal generally complies with the C-2 residential guidelines in terms of providing a 15 ft. setback at the lane with an additional 6 ft. terracing back to the second storey to minimize overlook on the residential neighbours. While the courtyard is only 20 ft. wide it is also only two storeys high. The guidelines call for a minimum of 20 ft. width provided there are no principal rooms on the lowest floor which face onto the courtyard. The principal material is metal on the streetscape facade, along with a glazed canopy system for pedestrian weather protection.

The Panel's advice is sought on the architectural quality and detailing, and livability.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Ken King, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application and generally liked the materials and the courtyard arrangement.

It was acknowledged that it is a challenge to make the narrow width of the courtyard work well. Some Panel members recommended simplifying the materials in the courtyard and cautioned against trying to do too much in this small space. One Panel member would have preferred the size of the courtyard to be increased at the expense of the rear decks. A recommendation was made to extend some of the elevation materials to the courtyard landscaping, e.g., concrete and metal planters, and screening. One Panel member thought there should be more glazing to the courtyard. A concern was raised about the exposed stairs and how rainwater will collect and be dispersed. In general, the Panel thought more could be done to make the courtyard more neighbourly and something that could be appreciated from inside the units as well as allow some surveillance. A suggestion was made that further design development to the middle unit B might achieve more space at the entry.

A recommendation was made to provide windows at the third floor level where is currently shows prefinished siding windows.

A recommendation was made to lighten up the colour of the brick.

With respect to the retail frontage, a suggestion was made that it might be possible to have inward opening doors. A recommendation was made to raise the canopy and increase the size of the retail window. There was also a suggestion to delete the glazed awning in favour of a simpler canopy system.

A Panel member questioned whether the powder room could be located under the stairs rather than taking up valuable floor space in the unit.

A question was raised as to whether there has been any discussion with the adjoining property owner about sharing the parking ramp.

The Panel emphasized that the success of this project will be determined by the quality of the detailing, including the façade detailing, the railings, and the interface of windows and brick elements. There was also a suggestion to reconsider the vinyl window material, and to make a stronger statement at the corner by starting the second material at a different plane.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. King thanked the Panel for the good comments. He said he can work on the detailing of the facades. With regard to the courtyard, he noted it is a very tight site but the Panel's points are well taken and will be revisited.

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| 4. Address: | 5605 Dunbar Street |
| DA: | 407512 |
| Use: | Mixed (3 storeys, 4 units) |
| Zoning: | C-2 |
| Application Status: | Complete |
| Architect: | Allan Diamond |
| Owner: | Meniscus Developments Inc. |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Allan Diamond |
| Staff: | Anita Molaro |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, presented this application for a small C-2 development on Dunbar Street. The proposal is for a 3-storey building with retail on the ground floor and four residential units above. Each unit is approximately 1,200 sq.ft., two facing onto Dunbar Street and two onto the lane. The four units are separated by a 48 ft. courtyard and the main entry to the residential is through the courtyard.

Staff have no major issues and note the proposal complies with the guidelines. It meets the 15 ft. setback requirement at the rear and proposes a setback of at least 20 ft. to provide separation from the RS single family zone across the lane.

The Panel's comments are sought on the architectural quality including the proposed materials. The front elevation on Dunbar is stone veneer with concrete sills and black metal anodized doors and windows. Interior and lane facades are stucco. Comments are also sought on the landscaping of the courtyard and the livability of the units.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Allan Diamond, Architect, noted this is intended to be a rental building. The retail space can be divided into two. He explained they decided not to have decks on the front of the building but to create a building that could be a statement for the street for future neighbouring development to emulate. The courtyard is an important element of the building. Mr. Diamond stressed that this client is mostly interested in having a building that will be livable and well maintained. The materials are simple and the design is intended to be simple.

The architect responded to the Panel's questions.

- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel supported this application and generally liked the use of materials and the overall quality of the building.

The Panel strongly recommended retaining a landscape architect to improve the materials and design of the courtyard. The applicant was also urged to create more neighbourliness in the courtyard. One Panel member found the fences to be unfriendly. The central staircase could be improved by increasing the width and introducing some natural light. Careful attention should be given to the detailing and circulation in the courtyard.

There was no consensus on the canopy material, whether canvas or metal and glass, but a comment was made that whatever material is chosen it needs to be improved to match the quality of the facade treatment.

Concern was expressed that the two entrances both look like back doors. The front entry on Dunbar Street lacks any sense of entry. It was suggested that consideration be given to greater separation between the two retail doors and the residential entry. It was also thought that more attention should be given to the rear entry, given it is likely to be the principal entry for the residents.

A recommendation was made to extend the second floor windows to the third floor where it looks like there needs to be more window. In general, more thought should be given to window proportions and the balance between solid and glass.

It was noted that the success of this building will depend on the strength of the detailing. The Panel commended the applicant's desire for maintenance free materials but had some concerns about whether this would be achieved. It was suggested the use of stucco be reconsidered in favour of cement board. The top cornices might also be revisited, where the foam element does not meet the quality of the stone detailing as presented.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Diamond agreed that not much attention was given to the landscaping and it can be much improved. With respect to the awnings, he noted this is a suburban area where the canvas canopy is more appropriate; it also avoids the problems involved in providing a demountable canopy. It is intended more for detail than sun protection. He agreed they can revisit the nature of the cornices. With regard to the courtyard and the nature of the stairwell, Mr. Diamond said the comments are well taken. He thanked the Panel for all the comments and said they will be considered in design development. He agreed the most unfinished aspect of the scheme is the courtyard.

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