

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: May 24, 2006

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Margot Long (excused Item 1.)
Nigel Baldwin
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
Tom Bunting (Item 2. only)
James Cheng (Item 1. only)
Bill Harrison
Eileen Keenan
John Wall
Peter Wreglesworth (excused Item 1.)
C.C. Yao

REGRETS: Albert Bicol

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** D. Kempton

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	730 Earl Finning Way
2.	2550 Maple Street (Formerly 1996 W. Broadway)

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| 1. Address: | 730 Earl Finning Way |
| DE: | 410215 |
| Use: | Office and Retail (3 storeys) |
| Zoning: | CD-1 |
| Application Status: | Complete |
| Architect: | Busby, Perkins and Will |
| Owner: | UBC Properties Trust |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Peter Busby, Martin Nielsen, Bruce Hemstock |
| Staff: | Sailen Black |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Development Planner, presented this complete development application for the Centre for Interactive Research and Sustainability (CIRS) on the 30 acre portion of the Finning Lands. Mr. Black provided the surrounding site context and described the policy and development background of the Finning Lands. In 1996, Council approved the False Creek Flats Preliminary Concept Plan which seeks to encourage employment generators in the area, including high tech business parks. In 1999, the site was rezoned for a high technology urban industrial park. While the goal of retaining employment within Vancouver remains today, some of the emphasis on high tech uses has faded. The typical approach to development and employment generation is to have highly intensive development that is diverse and mixed-use in character with a fairly efficient use of space.

The proposed development is a new three-storey research and education facility which is a public/private/not-for-profit partnership, incorporating a theatre for public use as well as educational use. Mr. Black said the applicant should be congratulated for the numerous sustainable features incorporated into the buildings of this proposal.

Mr. Black advised the applicant is seeking a reduction from the required 106 parking stalls to 32 surface parking stalls, based on the occupants and programs of the building. This issue is being negotiated with Engineering Services and does not require the Panel's comments. Parking on the Finning Lands and in the Great Northern Way business park should be underground and neither the location nor the number of stalls proposed in this application is a viable solution.

Staff have a minor concern that the east elevation is somewhat unarticulated, but the major concern relates not to the building itself but what is left over on the site, noting the Guidelines envisage relatively dense development. Requested density is about 1.2 FSR with 41 percent site coverage. This leaves a large area that is not intensively developed and fails to create the well defined street edge sought in the Guidelines.

The Panel is requested to comment on how the Guidelines are addressed in this application and its impact on future redevelopment of the area.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Peter Busby, Architect, explained that the facility will accommodate researchers from four universities who are involved in sustainability studies. Other partners are PowerSmart and Terasen Gas, and the prime private sector tenant is Suzuki. He briefly described the proposed development and noted that the owners are willing to provide underground parking in the next phase of development. Mr. Busby described the sustainability features of the development and noted there is a significant setback for a greenway for bicycle and pedestrian movement. He said the goal

is for this to be the first energy-neutral building in North America. Bruce Hemstock, Landscape Architect, reviewed the landscape plan, highlighting the proposed sustainability features.

With respect to the issues raised by Planning staff, Mr. Busby said they believe that any more articulation on the east elevation would appear contrived. With respect to the density, he said they have worked hard with the owners to increase the size of the project but it is a risky venture financially. They are on budget without underground parking. Mr. Busby stressed, however, that underground parking will be incorporated in the second phase of the development. In summary, he said they believe they have met the intent of the guidelines to the best of their ability. He briefly reviewed the strategy with respect to the use of vehicles and stressed there is a real commitment to pioneering a different transportation model here, which makes traditional parking inappropriate.

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

The Panel had no substantial concerns with any aspect of this proposal.

- **Panel Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application. A comment was made that this is a very significant building that needs to be built, regardless of issues such as parking and side yards. The Panel was confident the project will live up to its ambitious goals.

With respect to density, one Panel member noted that as density increases it becomes more difficult to make it sustainable and from that point of view this building is not a good test for things like orientation. However, it goes a long way and is a very good start. The merits of the original plan for this site were also questioned, with a suggestion that the aim of a developing a highly urban site should be amended in favour of a campus of buildings with bigger side yards and an emphasis on sustainability. It was noted that while the proposal does result in large exterior spaces, they are good amenity spaces, and to change this would be counter to the positive goals of the project. This building will undoubtedly be a landmark building and it deserves to have some breathing space around it.

The Panel had no concerns with the east elevation which it found well ordered and attractive.

With respect to the sustainability features of the building, one Panel member suggested considering experimental methods to reduce the amount of concrete and associated greenhouse emissions.

There was a recommendation to give consideration to night lighting since this will be an important building for the design community to learn from. Perhaps the landscape area along Great Northern Way and part of the building itself could employ experimental solar lighting methods so that it is a 24-hour demonstration project.

The Panel unanimously supported the applicant's strategy with respect to parking. Given the nature of this building, an extremely aggressive reduction in parking is very appropriate. The Panel was disappointed that underground parking is being proposed for the second phase which it thought should be reconsidered, with the support of the City.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Busby thanked the Panel for its comments. He noted they are considering using a composite form system for the building. He also agreed to pursue solar powered night lighting which he thought was a good suggestion.

2. Address:	2550 Maple Street (formerly 1966 West Broadway)
DE:	409749
Use:	Mixed Use (6-storeys)
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	The Abbarch Partnership
Owner:	Brook Development
Review:	Second
Delegation:	Michael Burton-Browne, Jane Durante
Staff:	Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-9)

A letter from the Kitsilano Area Child Care Society was distributed and circulated to the Panel for information prior to review of this application.

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, introduced this preliminary application for the site on the corner of West Broadway and Maple Street in the C-3A zone of Central Broadway. On November 23, 2005, the Panel reviewed a previous preliminary application for this site which was not supported. The subject proposal is similar to the previous scheme, having a ground floor entry to a Government Liquor Store on the West Broadway elevation as well as additional access at the rear. Ms. Rondeau noted the liquor store use is a controversial aspect of this application.

The previous proposal included a Community Police Office on Maple Street, which has now been deleted in favour of retail space. Floors three to six are market residential use with a lobby located off Maple Street. There is a large loading facility proposed off the lane, as well as underground parking accessed from the lane.

Ms. Rondeau briefly reviewed the height and massing of the proposal compared to the Central Broadway C-3A Guidelines. She noted the podium height has been reduced by 5 ft. since the previous submission. The proposed height, at 73 ft., is slightly higher than suggested by the Guidelines, which staff support given there is no additional view impact.

The Panel is asked to consider whether the proposal earns the density and height being sought. With respect to the liquor store use, Ms. Rondeau noted the liquor store guidelines indicate there can be no worsening of a current situation. This liquor store will replace an existing store to the west of the site. The Planning Department has not taken a position on the matter and notes the condition is not worsened with respect to the elementary school but it does come closer to the church.

- **Applicant comments:** Michael Burton-Browne, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and the response to the Panel's previous comments. The Landscape Architect, Jane Durante, reviewed the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

Major design development is required in response to the Panel's commentary.

- **Panel Comments:**

The Panel did not support this submission and found the revisions made since the previous scheme to be somewhat superficial.

There were no problems with the proposed uses, and it was noted the liquor store location will be addressed by others.

It was acknowledged that the applicant has worked hard to redistribute the massing but the Panel had the same concerns expressed previously, largely relating to the bulk and mass of the residential component and its character being out of context with the immediate neighbourhood and with Kitsilano in general. Material quality was also an issue.

There were concerns with the treatment of the lane which is not as friendly or green as it could be and needs major redesign to humanize it.

With respect to the lane elevation it was noted the proposed grid pattern seems to accentuate the height and mass of the podium which may not be appropriate. While the trellis over the ramp has some merit it is a weakly expressed device.

There were concerns with the six-storey wall which is fairly close to relatively small buildings, noting it has also been widened since the previous submission. While there has been some attempt to reduce the sense of the mass it has not been done where it addresses the context. It was suggested that priority should be given to the expression of the south façade to provide a massing and treatment that is much friendlier. The larger mass should also be broken down and articulated more on West Broadway. There was a comment that this is not important gateway building but one which needs to fit in its context, including some recognition that there will be 55 ft. height to the west. It does not need a strong corner expression.

The small kiosk type pieces on Broadway were supported although their viability was questioned. There also needs to be a more direct way to get to the street, not a full service corridor but more informal servicing would be appropriate and convenient for these small units.

There were concerns about the two elevators and exit stairs on the street with the inactive lobby in between. There was also concern about the three steps up into the liquor store. One Panel member thought the liquor store could be dropped to the street level with the grade change addressed at the rear access to the liquor store. Other suggestions included lowering the food store and raising the liquor store.

It was stressed that the density can only be earned through good design. The building as proposed seems to exacerbate the height and bulk issues. There was a suggestion to reduce floor-to-floor heights and it was noted the soffits seem to be contributing to the bulkiness of the building.

There was a suggestion to consider a coffee shop at the corner, noting some additional setback on Maple Street will make it a sunny location for sidewalk seating. In general, reconsideration of the corner could bring the building more in character with the neighbourhood.

Concern was expressed about the functionality of the two levels of underground parking that will serve the retail component and the likely inadequacy of having only two

elevators. There seems to be no simple and logical way to move through the building and congestion could be significant.

The Panel did not believe the project earned its height and density. It was also strongly recommended that sustainability needs to be an integral part of the scheme.

- **Applicant Response:** Mr. Burton-Browne noted the food store operators agree with the suggestions for animating the corner and it is recognized that valid retail activity on the corner will be important. He noted the food store has to be on the second floor because it is the biggest floor plate and the liquor store has to be on the ground floor.