
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: May 29, 2002

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Joseph Hruda, Deputy Chair
Helen Besharat
Gerry Eckford
Richard Henry (Presenting for Item 2)
Rena Lazar
Stuart Lyon
Maurice Pez (Item 1 and Presenting for Item 2)
Ken Terriss
Sorin Tatomir

REGRETS: Jeffrey Corbett
Kim Perry

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Rae Ratslef, Raincoast Ventures

<p style="text-align: center;">ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Steetscape Design Standards Document2. 1005 Beach Avenue3. 2560 Kingsway4. 1280 Richards Street
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A member questioned the reason for shadow studies and requested clarification concerning how were to be used in the Panel's review. Ralph Segal indicated that in the planning and review side of the applications, staff assessed carefully the shadow impact on public spaces and on neighbouring spaces. He noted that, in some instances, height relaxations might not be supported given their shadow cast.

Later in the meeting members were informed that the Panel's June 12, 2002 meeting would be a workshop with the Heritage Commission to consider the first three options for the Burrard Bridge upgrade.

1. Streetscape Design Standards Document

Introduction

Ralph Segal circulated a binder containing a draft manual titled “Streetscape Design Standards”, providing a description of long range urban objectives for the city streetscapes. As well, members received copies of the manual’s Table of Contents, and a document titled “Streetscape Design Standards Decision Making Process”.

Mr. Segal introduced the documentation and provided an overview of the intent of the design standards to coordinate and integrate the interests of various responsible agencies and individuals relative to the urban design of sidewalks. He noted that the manual was based on a compilation of existing streetscape treatments and documents, and contained a proposed classification and design standards for streets in the City based on their pedestrian functions.

The Panel was informed that the manual was in draft form and had not yet been presented to Council.

Consultant’s Comments

Lance Berelowitz, Consultant, joined the Panel for consideration of this Item. Mr. Berelowitz offered information on the manual’s time limited consultation process that was structured with agencies that were either advisory to Council, or that had a vested interest in streetscape design. He advised that manual was intended to be presented to Council towards the end of June 2002, at or near the same time as a report on street furniture.

Referencing the posted materials, Mr. Berelowitz commented on the proposed streetscape classifications including ceremonial, cross-town, main, scenic, downtown commercial, and neighbourhood streets, and waterfront promenade, and lane/alley. As well, he discussed the generic guidelines that had been drafted for sidewalk uses, materials, and mid-block and corner furniture zones. Mr. Berelowitz noted that the intent was for the manual to be used to classify the streets and to provide generic guidelines for the sidewalk design for each classification.

Mr. Berelowitz also commented on the manual’s reference to street trees, and its recommendations on specific species depending on the objective of their use. As well, he commented on the importance of trees in the overall streetscape design.

Panel Questions and Discussion

In response to questions, Mr. Berelowitz indicated that it was anticipated that there would be areas in the City that would come forward and motivate for exclusion in the design standards, i.e. areas that were defined and distinguished by a business improvement district would opt out once their standard was approved by Council. He clarified that the manual was intended as a living document that would continue to evolve over time based on changing needs and circumstances.

Concerning a query regarding the selection of Burrard rather than Granville or Oak as a ceremonial street, Mr. Berelowitz discussed the criteria for the classification of streetscapes from the pedestrian perspective. It was noted that the manual was a very tentative first draft that would be become the basis for further design discussions.

Several Panel members suggested that the manual provided an opportunity to look at means of elevating the streetscape design bar to extend the quality of the pedestrian experience in Stanley Park. In response, it was noted that the Park Board had jurisdictional authority over what happened in Stanley Park, and that the manual's primary goal was to deal with streets within the City proper. However, it was noted that the Park roads and causeway were referenced in the manual which implied that the standards should be met in future work in the Park.

In response to further comments, it was emphasized that the manual was intended as a living document. Mr. Berelowitz noted that the classifications had occurred with input from City staff, and limited input from other agencies. He advised that the clients for the manual's creation were both the City's Engineering and Planning departments, and commented that there had been an exemplary degree of cooperation between the two departments.

Concerning the proposed standards, clarification was offered that the intent was to generate a higher public standard that would not be privatized by specialized treatment associated with a property owner. However, it was noted that it was desired to create a public standard that was of high enough quality so as to be welcomed as a flow through onto private space.

In discussion, members generally agreed that the standard for new patterns and designs should be set high on ceremonial and main streets, with the exception of one member who suggested that there was a need to assess the financial implications for raising the standards.

In general discussion of the draft manual, Panel member's comments included that the manual:

- needed to more strongly express engineering standards;
- was a very impressive exercise that would provide developers and architects clear guidance;
- should include references to spill out encroachments and how they could be allowed rather than discouraged to provide life to the pedestrian experience;
- was well organized and easy to use;
- should be broadened in its scope to address curb-to-curb planning, and flexible to allow for innovative approaches;
- should include reference to maintenance and sustainability issues, signage, bus connectors for the seabus, incorporating art, and historical research.

A Panel member suggested that Oak Street needed to be in some way identified as an important street, noting that Oak and many other streets with different characters were not cross-towns but did serve as cross-town routes. As well, several members commented that the classification for Granville needed to be revisited, particularly given its importance as the first time route into Vancouver for many. It was also suggested that Coal Harbour was becoming recognized as a scenic route. The need for further information on the urban design definitions of streets was noted.

Several Panel members commented that there was the need for increased coordination between the City's Planning and Engineering departments and the Park Board in this manual and in many other initiatives.

Staff was requested to arrange for the Panel to receive a Urban Street Furniture presentation.

2. Address:	1005 Beach Avenue
DA:	406675
Use:	Residential (28 storeys, 106 units)
Zoning:	CD-1
Architect:	Lawrence Doyle
Owner:	Concert Real Estate Corp.
Review:	First
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-3)

Introduction

Jonathan Barrett, Planner, referencing the project model, introduced the application for 1005 Beach Avenue noting that it had been through a thorough planning process to determine set-backs from property lines, and that most issues had been defined and clarified in the rezoning process.

It was noted that staff had no significant issues with the application, however, comments from the Panel were sought regarding the building character, and landscape design, including the garage entrance and loading access.

Applicant's Opening Comments

Maurice Pez, Concert Properties, Richard Henry, Richard Henry Architects, and Larry Doyle, LDA, joined the Panel for consideration of this Item.

Mr. Pez indicated that the location of the loading provided direct access to the core of the building without impacting on parking, and suggested that its scale, inlay and approach was most sensitive.

Richard Henry, Richard Henry Architects, referencing the project model and posted drawings, indicated that the development was seen as a landmark building for the City given that it was extremely prominent from Burrard Street, a key entry way to the City. Mr. Henry commented regarding the development in the context of the surrounding neighbourhood, noted that the applicant was seeking a height relaxation, and provided information on the neighbourhood consultation in relation to the application.

Concerning the loading access, Mr. Henry indicated that the City's Planning and Engineering departments had been consulted and had agreed that it was most feasible, from an urban design and access perspective, to use the lane for loading. He advised that the parking garage entrance was incorporated as prescribed by the CD-1 guidelines, and noted that the applicant had sought ways to design the building to appear as tall and slender as possible noting, and that it was well under the maximum allowed floorplate. Mr. Henry indicated that the elevator core was the tallest element and was celebrated in the project design, and acknowledged the project's abstract interpretation of the Burrard Bridge design character.

In his further comments, Mr. Henry reviewed the project's landscape design, commented on the amenity spaces on the second floor of the building, and noted the design of the gardens as visual amenities. As well, he commented regarding the view analysis, and reviewed the proposed building materials for the tower and decorative elements around the base of the building using a palette of colors that was compatible to the bridge colours.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

Panel's Comments

Concerning the overall form of the building, most members indicated their general support for its massing, smaller footprint and floorplate, and its nicely resolved narrow form, particularly as seen from the Burrard Bridge. However, several members did indicate an opinion that the base of the building was too weak, particularly on the west and south elevations, and that the top of the base needed further thought and detailing.

While some members indicated their appreciation of the iconography of the project to the Bridge, others felt that it was in conflict. One member suggested that the project's reference to the Bridge, and the arch on the east elevation, seemed token, and offered that the project could benefit from some simplification.

With respect to the top of the building, two members suggested that there was too much going on for such a visible location, and that the project could benefit overall from more coordination between its top and base. Another member suggested that the top needed to make more of a statement in order to have a more dramatic impact from up close, while another indicated that the top offered nothing spectacular from different views. No concerns were expressed regarding the height.

Members recognized the project's landmark status but suggested that it needed to be viewed as a landmark from all directions. One member suggested that the building needed further design elaboration as seen from the downtown side. The west elevation glazing was relentlessly repetitive from the base to the top. Some further differentiation of glazing type or detail would help this facade.

With respect to the garage, members suggested that the entrance and driveway design detracted from the building's front entrance, and that it was disappointing that the strong element of the garage did not seem to be as well thought out as the rest of the building details. However, members supported the loading solution, suggesting that it worked out nicely, particularly given that the loading took place below the building under a canopy.

Members generally agreed that the landscape concept was well resolved with the exception of how the driveway was handled. Suggestions for improvements included that the open areas should be linked to provide a pedestrian pattern around the perimeter, and that the location of the children's play area would be better if shifted to the open area in the west.

In response to the applicant's request for feedback on the colour palette and building materials, several members indicated that the colour palette was favourable and expressed appreciation for its relation to the Bridge, while another suggested that the colour scheme was unsuccessful. The materials board was deceptive, because the decorative tiles which are a small part of the facade were relatively prominent on the board.

Applicant's Response

The applicant thanked the Panel for its comments, indicated that the building design was seen as an ongoing process, and advised that the issue of the garage would be worked on.

3. Address:	2560 Kingsway
DA:	406609
Use:	Mixed (3 storeys)
Zoning:	C-2
Architect:	Terry Yen & Assoc.
Owner:	Rose Chee
Review:	First
Staff:	Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

Introduction

Bob Adair, referencing the project model and posted drawings, introduced the three storey residential and commercial development application for 2560 Kingsway. Mr. Adair commented on the context of the surrounding neighbourhood noting that the project was situated in a streetscape of one and two storey existing commercial with residential. The Panel's comments were sought regarding the project's livability and rear landscaping.

In response to questions, Mr. Adair commented on the maximum allowable height in C2, advised that no relaxations were being requested for this project, and noted that the adjacent property was a parking lot.

Applicant's Opening Comments

Terry Yon, Terry Yon Architect, and Rose Chee, joined the Panel for consideration of this Item. No comments were provided by the applicant.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

Panel's Comments

Panel members expressed their unanimous support for the project, suggesting that it was a functional little building and that it was the best use for this site. Several members suggested that the applicant should consider additional height for the project, and should consider more colour and the choice of building materials.

Concerning the rear entrance to the building, a member suggested that its design could be elevated to make it more inviting for residents given that it would serve as their front door. As well, it was suggested that the second floor could be brought out a few feet to improve the livability of those units and to provide bigger balconies on the third floor.

Further comments included the need for the project to address how commercial access to pick up garbage would be resolved, to increase or not use brick on the lower floor, and suggestion that an illuminating sign would dominate the front facade and should not be included. As well, it was suggested that street trees could be included in the project, and that the project's success would be in its details.

Applicant's Response

Mr. Yon advised that the applicant would consider improvements to the projects' rear entry and brick elements, and thanked the Panel for its comments.

4. Address:	1280 Richards Street
DA:	406694
Use:	Residential (27 storeys, 77 units)
Zoning:	DD
Architect:	Preliminary
Owner:	Grace Residence Ltd.
Review:	First
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

Introduction

Scot Hein introduced the preliminary application for 1280 Richards Street, noting that there was a similar scheme for the site that had been previously approved by the Panel and the Development Permit Board but that was overturned by the Board of Variance. He advised Panel members that the application before it should be considered as a new application, on its own merits.

Referencing the massing model, Mr. Hein commented on the application in the context of the surrounding neighbourhood, and indicated that a number of towers depicted in the model were either built or under construction. It was noted that further development was anticipated to the south.

Panel members were informed that there was an existing six storey residential component on the site - Phase 1, and that the application - Phase 2 - would be integrated and share access. He noted that the application generally met the set-back and height requirements, and was considered architecturally consistent with the Phase 1 development.

The Panel's comments were sought concerning:

- distribution and massing of the podium and tower;
- placement of the tower within the block and the precinct generally;
- transition in massing and facade treatment approach.

Applicant's Opening Comments

Paul Merrick, Merrick Architects, James Schouw, Chuck Brook and Era Lee, joined the Panel for consideration of this Item.

Mr. Brook presented the urban design rationale for the project noting that the application was based on the Downtown South guidelines that required a minimum separation of 80 ft. between towers. He noted that the Canadian Linen building had been given a reduced set-back from 40 ft. to 32 ft., and advised that the applicant had responded with a set-back that resulted in an overall separation of 110 ft to create a maximum separation distance in the block face while maintaining the checkerboard pattern of buildings.

Mr. Brook noted that the applicant had thus tried to provide the residents of the Metropolis with the maximum possible separation without compromising the future livability of the Concorde project residents, and noted that the existing base would need to be somewhat modified given the proposed location for the tower.

Mr. Merrick discussed the architectural treatment and building elements noting that the most significant difference between the original application and the one before the Panel was an increase in the base from

15 ft -20 ft to 50+ ft. Referencing the developed elevation drawings, he commented on the project's attitude towards the streetscape to read much more as housing at the street than in the sky.

Concerning the landscape design, Mr. Brook noted that the landscape area at the podium had been extended and provided more area to work with in terms of semi-private open space.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

Panel's Comments

The Panel expressed its unanimous support for the project, and its general support for the relocation of the tower given the issues considered. However, several members suggested that, while the relocation of the tower was an improvement for Metropolis, it was now blinkering the new Concert building. Several members suggested that the tower should be pushed back 5 ft. towards the Metropolis for structural and urban design reasons.

Members expressed support for the higher podium, and suggested that it was a very different and refreshing design for Vancouver and was highly welcomed. One member suggested that the podium's left portion was strong in terms of massing but that it needed simpler vocabulary and expression.

No concern was expressed regarding the project's transition to the Metropolis, and it was felt that the transition and massing to the Canadian Linen building was handled well.

One member suggested it was bewildering that the landscape drawing had no relation to the tower, that the roof garden was not in line with the vocabulary of the building, and that the trees at the base of the tower competed with the cornice lines and articulation of the top of the base. Others commented that the courtyard needed a stronger connection to the tower and a more exuberant treatment on the edges of the townhouses, and that there was a disconnect between the rooftop and courtyard amenity spaces.

The livability of some units, particularly those facing the lane, was questioned, and suggestion was offered that the detailing on the ground level could be more robust like the tower. Members generally supported the character of the building, particularly the portal which was seen as a very inviting and delightful space. It was suggested that the portal's overall success would be largely determined by its treatment materials.

Applicant's Response

Mr. Brook addressed the Panel concerning the applicant's first application for this site. He noted that the development permit application had received the Panel's support in its second review and the support of the Development Permit Board in a vote of 2 to 1. Panel members were informed that at the Development Permit Board, the chief objector of the project sought to have the tower pushed to the corner of the site, and noted that the objection was heard but not supported given the project's compliance with the guidelines.

Prior to (and during) the application's presentation to the Board of Variance, the applicant contacted Concert to invite their attendance to represent the future residents of their Oscar development and to help the Board to understand the genesis of the tower placement. Mr. Brook noted he found it troubling that the Panel had today commented on this application's "blinkering" of the Concert project given that the developer for that site had not taken the opportunity to represent their interests at the Board of Variance.