

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** May 5, 2010

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

**PLACE:** Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Bruce Haden (Chair)  
Robert Barnes  
James Cheng  
Jeff Corbett  
Jane Durante, Excused Item #2  
David Godin  
Oliver Lang, Excused Item #2  
Vladimir Mikler  
Scott Romses  
Alan Storey

**REGRETS:**  
Steve McFarlane  
Maurice Pez  
Jim Huffman

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	Georgia Steps Phase 2 Conceptual Designs
2.	1754-1772 Pendrell Street

**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Haden called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

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| 1. Address:         | Georgia Steps Phase 2 Conceptual Designs                                   |
| DE:                 | Non Voting Workshop  |
| Description:        | To seek input and advice as to the best options from an urban perspective. |
| Zoning:             | N/A  |
| Application Status: | N/A  |
| Review:             | Second   |
| Owner:              | City of Vancouver  |
| Consultant:         | Chris Phillips, Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg, Landscape Architect         |
| Staff:              | Michael Gordon, Ralph Segal and Matthew Bourke                             |

**EVALUATION: NON-VOTING WORKSHOP**

*These minutes are a compilation of April 7, 2010 Presentation and May 5, 2010 Commentary from the Panel.*

- **Introduction:** Michael Gordon, Planner, described the proposal noting that there will be a high level review for the site as well as an approved public benefits strategy for the area. He added that they are working with the property owners, stakeholders and residents in the area. The most important element will be the pedestrian realm and they are looking at the identifying the connectivity to the surrounding areas. The original plan had six options and those have been reduced down to three.

*Option 1 - Georgia Stairs.* It is a pedestrian only option with the addition of stairs and an elevator. The concept is for a grand staircase with iconic "light pillars", weather protection, greens spaces, and a continuation of the False Creek water-body across Pacific Boulevard.

*Option 2 - Georgia Ribbon.* It is also pedestrian oriented but with the addition of a cyclist/disabled access with the addition of stairs and an elevator. The concept is for an iconic pathway, winding informal edge, green spaces and a continuation of the False Creek water-body across Pacific Boulevard.

*Options 3 - Georgia Red Poles.* It is also pedestrian oriented but with the addition of a cyclist/disabled access with the addition of stairs and an elevator. The concept is for iconic lite red poles that connect Georgia Street to the False Creek water-body. It is to be an informal meandering pathway wrapped between red poles and a continuation of the False Creek water-body across Pacific Boulevard.

- Ralph Segal, Senior Architect and Development Planner, further described the proposal for the Georgia Steps Phase 2 Conceptual Design. He also described how the Georgia Steps will connect with an overall public system. There is an immersing structural play with linkages from the downtown to the water in False Creek. It will be critical that there is an open space at the foot of Georgia Street that links back into the downtown. Mr. Segal noted that there are plans for a disabled ramp for wheelchairs and a pedestrian bridge across Pacific Boulevard. Mr. Segal added that the development of the site to the west of the stadium for the new casino/hotel will make the pedestrian access even more important.

Chris Phillips, Architect, noted the importance of the site as a piece of a bigger puzzle in city. The building and stadium edges, the water front all must fit into the bigger urban design exercise. There are a number of existing issues that have to be taken into consideration such as getting access from the stadium to Georgia Street and access to the stadium's loading area. Mr. Phillips noted that there are a number of levels that will need to be connected. The stairs around the stadium are currently aligned to the stadium and not Georgia Street and that will have to change. They want to make sure that they include bicycles, disabled access and pedestrian pathways so that everyone will be able to get from Georgia Street to the waterfront. He noted that in Option 1 there isn't a ramp so bicycles would have to use Smythe Street. The Bicycle Committee has stated that they would like to see access through the area. The other two options both have ramps and are being handled differently. They also have wider stairs, an elevator and an elevated walkway that has been made narrower. The Georgia Stairs option has a large set of stairs coming down to Georgia Street with a large gesture at the water front. This option would connect from the waterfront in False Creek up to Georgia Street. There would also be light pillars with a glass canopy for weather protection. The plan is for a large area that would be urban space with some iconic pieces that will link through the site. There are no ramps planned in this option. In Option 2 a ramp would be introduced all the way from Georgia Street through to Pacific Boulevard with stairs paralleling the stairs. This plan calls for an iconic pathway in the shape of a red ribbon with a winding informal edge that could be lit. The ribbon would wind through and over the plaza and green spaces. In Option 3, the ramp structure is incorporated into the iconic pieces and becomes a marker and part of the structure. These could be about the waterfront piers and a big scale idea right through from downtown to the False Creek waterfront. They would be set in a green landscape and balance both the harsh urban space and be a visible landmark in the city.

Mr. Segal added that there will be another opportunity for how the design evolves when PavCo comes forward with their plans for the development on the east side of the stadium.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

1. Have the 3 options (individually or collectively) responded to Panel's previous comments, in particular:
  - Capturing a "big design idea";
  - Creating a sense of procession and connectivity, drawing pedestrians from the Downtown, across Pacific Boulevard to the water;
  - Integrating landscape, water, public art and other features to animate the overall experience.
2. Do the options anticipate opportunities for integration with future development and Public Realm?

City Staff and the consultant took questions from the Panel.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel thought there were some exciting ideas in the proposal.

The Panel agreed that the proposal was going in the right direction and that the area needed to be animated in order to work well. This should include consideration of adding program to generate activity. Several Panel members thought there needed to be some art pieces in the space that would attract people to the area. As well the Panel thought there needed to be some weather protection. Most of the Panel like either Option 2 or Option 3 as they felt the stairs needed to be accessible to everyone.

There was some concern regarding possible CPTED issues and also were concerned about possible visual barriers at the water level. Also there was concern about the amount and type of maintenance that would be required for the area.

The Panel thought that Option 3's red poles made for more visibility but thought they needed to be tied into BC Place. Option 4 has a combination of Option 2 and 3 and the Panel thought there could be some weather protection offered with this proposal.

The Panel didn't have any issues with the secondary bridge across Pacific Avenue but thought it could be smaller. They noted that it was a good idea for the completion of the Sun Run and to offer an overlook experience. However, the bridge to be successful must be of very high quality design. The existing BC place overpass would not meet that criteria.

One Panel member noted that the ribbon wall was most unlike anything in Vancouver or in North America for that matter. It was suggested that the ribbon could start at Georgia Street and maybe it's not straight, maybe its coloured and it could start small and get bigger down to the waterfront. They also thought the development of the plaza at the waterfront would be very important and there should be a link considered across Pacific Avenue.

Several Panel members thought getting a large corporation to help with the costs was a great idea. Maintenance was flagged by several panel members as a key issue.

It was suggested that an artists be part of the design team from the beginning to help integrate the work in the overall concept.

One Panel member noted that the project seemed to end at Pacific Avenue and should continue the connection from Georgia Street to the waterfront and suggested the ribbon could span across in a grander scale to a terminus or park. They noted that is was important that the link from the waterfront to the city was as important as the link from the city to the waterfront.

A couple of Panel members wanted to see a larger idea, a simple and bold approach, that could tie the various elements together and that didn't rely heavily on the waterfront park. One Panel member noted that it could be experiential for the public that will use the area and needed an element that would draw people from the waterfront to the city.

A couple of Panel members were concerned with the elevated object noting that people with disabilities won't be able to make a long journey to get to the elevators. They thought the experience for those people should be improved so that they did not have to go through the loading area. Also it was noted that the ground plane at Griffiths Way needed further investigation.

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2. Address:	1754-1772 Pendrell Street
DE:	Rezoning
Description:	To seek support for a revised submission of a residential tower/podium having both condos and affordable housing units.
Zoning:	RM-5 to CD-1
Application Status:	RZ
Review:	Second
Architect:	W.T. Leung Architects
Delegation:	Wing Ting Leung, W.T. Leung Architects Barry Krause, W.T. Leung Architects Larissa Luko, W.T. Leung Architects Jennifer Stamp, Durante Kreuk Landscape Architects Darren Smith, Durante Kreuk Landscape Architects
Staff:	Michael Naylor and Dale Morgan

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**EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-7)**

- **Introduction:** Michael Naylor, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for a site in the West End. The site has an existing 3-storey walk up and a house with a coach house and a vacant property. The houses are not on the Heritage Register. There are 26 units of existing rental housing and are provided by the private market but by virtue of their age and condition they are considered affordable. The proposal is a rezoning application and an earlier iteration was at the Panel in March of 2008. It looks to provide some replacement to the rental housing plus a condominium in a tower form. The previous proposal was looking at an increase of density 2.2 to 3.28 FSR and it kept both of the houses and renovated them provided ten units that would on a separate lot and turned over to the City's ownership and then the City would contract with a non-profit housing society who would operate housing on a break even basis. There are no subsidies from senior levels of government but the rents set below market. That particular model is active in current proposal. Mr. Naylor noted that they have had one open house with another one planned. There is some opposition in the neighborhood as there is some concern with view blockage and as well the tower podium form which is not typical for the West End and is out of character to other buildings in the area. They are also concerned with the lack of ground space around the building. The applicant is required to submit a proforma with the application and is currently being reviewed. Mr. Naylor informed the Panel that they didn't have to consider that the density being requested is needed to achieve the housing benefit.

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, further introduced the proposal noting that the previous scheme was supported by the Panel. He noted that this was one of the last remaining tower sites in the West End. Mr. Morgan described the RM-5 zoning noting that there are fairly prescriptive guidelines for tower size and placement and that any building higher than 110 feet has to be spaced a minimum of 400 feet between other towers on the same block face. For towers on the other side the space should be a minimum of 80 feet which complies with the existing 13-storey tower. Mr. Morgan went through the Panel's review of March 2008. He noted that the current application will replace the 26 units that are currently on site and deed that building to the City. The building has stayed the same but the building foot print has gone from 3,000 to 4,700 square feet which is still a fairly small floor plate. Because of the housing component, the application has a fairly tight proximity to the street edge. Mr. Morgan described the context for the surrounding area. By moving the building from the center towards the east side of the site has reduced the shadow impacts on Denman Street and has opened up the views. Regarding livability, most of the units have multiple orientations for good ventilation. He described the sustainability

strategy which is to include horizontal fins along the west elevation, overhangs and geothermal heat systems.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- Regarding the form of development with particular regard to the following:
  - Density and height
  - Building bulk
  - Ground plane relationship to the street
  - Livability
  - Neighbourliness
  - Solar response

Mr. Naylor and Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Wing Ting Leung, Architect, further described the proposal in more detail. He noted that the current scheme is comprised of three lots. The proposal is for 79 units of market housing with 26 non-market affordable rental units to replace the existing ones.

Jennifer Stamp, Landscape Architect, noted that the amenities are more on the inside of the building. There is an amenity room adjacent to the front lobby and have focused the views to the front and the back with landscaping.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development to the east and west property line elevations to reduce the impact on the adjacent properties;
  - Simplification and design development to the ground plane, particularly on Pendrell Street; and
  - Reconsider the relationship of the City owned units to the tower form including consideration of integrating City units in the tower.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel did not support the proposal noting that the density has a negative effect on the overall bulk, quality of amenities and open space and maybe too large for the site

The Panel did not have a problem with the height but were concerned with the amount of density and bulk for such a small site which had changed considerably since the previous review. Most of the Panel members thought the original scheme was better. They felt the proposal broke form with other towers in the West End and thought there was little benefit to the community. Several Panel members thought the proforma should have been done previous to the design. As well several Panel members suggested making the floor plate smaller. They suggested a taller, slimmer tower was more appropriate. Some members also thought that the livability of the units was not very good noting that the balconies were too small.

Several Panel members were concerned with the treatment of the blank walls facing the neighbours. They also thought the building was lacking in "West End" character One Panel member suggested moving some of the units in the podium into the tower to allow for the building to have more space around the ground plane that is more typical of the West End.

Several Panel members noted that podiums typically provide for more outdoor amenity space, however the podium in this proposal wasn't giving any more amenity space. They felt that there were two separate programs and that the amenity spaces were not working well together and as well are separated by a barrier.

A couple of Panel members thought the solar response had improved although one Panel member thought the applicant should be working with a consultant regarding the sustainability strategy. Another Panel member noted that the south and east facades had been handled in a sensitive manner. However, on the west and north (which leans more to the west) facades and with the amount of floor to ceiling glass the eyebrows would not give any shadowing and would only drive the cooling load higher. As a result this would make it harder to meet the LEED™ requirements.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Leung thanked the Panel for their comments. He noted that they went from 10 units (rooming units) in the house with a carriage house and now there are 26 units. He said they didn't want the costs to increase and had to take into consideration the current market conditions. Mr. Leung added that more height could free up more of the ground plane and he thought that could make a difference to the architecture.

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.