

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: November 12, 2003

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Stuart Lyon, Chair
Jeffrey Corbett
Reena Lazar
Brian Martin
Kim Perry
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss
Mark Ostry
Jennifer Marshall

REGRETS: Helen Besharat
Bruce Haden
Eva Lee

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	5312/92 Oak Street
2.	111 Alexander Street
3.	2201 Ash Street

BUSINESS**Proposal to Provide Feedback to City Staff**

The Panel discussed Reena Lazar's proposal dated October 29, 2003. The following comments and questions arose in the ensuing discussion:

- Whether the feedback should be provided at the "changeover" meeting so that incoming Panel members can benefit from the outgoing Panel's experience;
- There needs to be a specific agenda;
- It is also an opportunity for the Panel to provide feedback to staff on the way projects are presented;
- The Panel should consider urban design in Vancouver in general and provide feedback to staff at a more conceptual level;
- "unwritten policy" should be included in the discussion;
- Some specific design guidelines could be reviewed where the Panel believes they are not working;
- Whether the feedback session should include a more "freewheeling" component in addition to specific categories;
- Whether the feedback sessions are held annually or biannually.

It was agreed that the Panel needs to have a pre-discussion session to determine the agenda. Jennifer Marshall agreed to receive suggestions from Panel members. Input should be forwarded by e-mail to Jennifer by November 21, for discussion at the next meeting on November 26, 2003.

1.	Address:	5312/92 Oak Street
	Use:	Residential (2 storeys, 21 units)
	Zoning:	RS-1 to CD-1
	Applicant Status:	Rezoning
	Architect:	Formwerks
	Owner:	Chandler Development
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Jim Bussey, Robert Cadez, Peter Kreuk
	Staff:	Grant Miller

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Grant Miller, Planning Analyst, presented this rezoning application. The proposal is to develop 21 townhouses at 37th/Oak, on a site currently containing four single family homes. Proposed density is 1.0 FSR. The proposal is consistent with the Oakridge-Langara Policy Statement and staff generally support the proposed form of development. The Panel's comments are sought on the unusual one-way in, one-way out arrangement for the underground parking. On this site, an additional 20 percent density is achievable for the provision of affordable housing. This is not being sought in this application. A Community Amenity Contribution (CAC) is applicable.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Jim Bussey, Architect, described the design rationale, noting that a primary goal is to increase density and provide smaller, more affordable units. An attempt has been made to maintain the Shaughnessy appearance of the project. With respect to the interior courtyard, Mr. Bussy noted it is about 4 ft. wider than a similar project at 8th and Arbutus which has been very successful. He briefly described the proposed parking access arrangement, noting that each unit has its own garage door and direct access from the parkade. This arrangement has been supported by Engineering Services. A neighbourhood public information meeting generated no negative feedback. Peter Kreuk briefly described the landscape plan and the design team responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this rezoning application and supported the two-storey rowhouse concept for this neighbourhood.

The Panel supported the general massing of the project and liked the stone wall and metal fence around the base. The Panel generally thought this was a good method of increasing densification in parts of the city.

The Panel found the architectural style, while skillfully handled for its type, somewhat arbitrary and not reflective of anything in the neighbourhood. The Panel would prefer to see something more contemporary and fitting to this specific neighbourhood, particularly given that this is likely to be a precedent setting development for the area. Some Panel members recommended introducing some articulation to the roofline of the Oak Street building to break up its monotony.

It was suggested that the blank end wall of the end units could be handled more effectively to improve the view down both 37th and 38th Avenues.

There was a recommendation to introduce some natural light into the en-suite of the units facing the lane.

The Panel found the interior courtyard somewhat tight and suggested looking at pulling the rear units a little closer to the lane. The Panel appreciated the enhancement of the lane but thought more could be done to make it more like a street than a lane, possibly including lane addressing for the lane units. Concerns were expressed by one Panel member that these rear units seem like the "poor cousins" of the development, being quite a bit smaller and having little in the way of outlook.

A Panel member observed that this site is in the vicinity of the Ridgeway greenway and recommended that this project take some cues from this experimental project in terms of treating city lanes differently. Also, to do something different with the landscape on the frontage closest to the Ridgeway, to acknowledge that special condition.

The Panel strongly supported the proposed one-way vehicular access system and, with one exception, thought it would be very workable. Given this arrangement is somewhat experimental, one Panel member recommended that the City consider monitoring its operation. There was support for having parking under each unit.

One Panel member recommended improving the parking access stair to make it more inviting, also questioning whether it needs to be closed off.

There was a recommendation from one Panel member for the City to review its policy with respect to affordable housing if the process that is in place for achieving greater density in return for affordable units is not feasible. It was recommended that more developments like this should be encouraged, with something in place to ensure that some affordable units (to be administered by the City) are included.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bussey thanked the Panel for the comments which he said will be taken into consideration.

2.	Address:	111 Alexander Street
	DE:	407706
	Use:	Pump Station
	Zoning:	HA-2
	Applicant Status:	Complete
	Architect:	GVRD
	Owner:	City of Vancouver
	Review:	Second
	Delegation:	Sean Smith, Paul Dufault, D. Keith Melville, Don Brynildsen
	Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-2)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application by the GVRD for an upgraded pump station, first reviewed by the Panel on September 17, 2003. The Panel did not support the application at that time. The previous review included some discussion about the siting of the facility in the city, noting that attempts to either find an alternative location or expand the site area for re-siting were not successful. The proposal is to provide upgraded facilities to replace those that have been operating on this site for thirty years, to reduce the amount of sewage outflow into the harbour. For the Panel's second review Staff are not seeking the Panel's advice on the site location or siting of the facility, noting also that the Development Permit Board will be assessing all aspects of the application. The proposal will also be further reviewed by the Gastown Historical Area Planning Committee.

The Development Planner briefly reviewed the Panel's previous concerns about the proposal. A number of revisions have since been made to the project: The form is now a simple, rectilinear, industrial expression rather than a more literal heritage response; the height has been considerably lowered; there is an interpretive educational component; and improvements have been made to pedestrian amenity including more glazing, continuous weather protection and public realm and landscape improvements. The internal planning of the building has been adjusted by pulling the front wall equipment away from the inside face of the external wall in order to introduce an educational/commemorative display opportunity on the Alexander Street façade.

The Panel's comments are sought on whether the building now meets acceptable standards as a public utility building given its function and setting.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Sean Smith, GVRD, briefly described their initial ideas with respect to the art display potential, possibly including children's artwork. He said they believe there has been real improvement since the earlier submission: the design is honest, simple, and contextually sound. They have tried to open up the station as much as possible and have incorporated an educational component. Paul Dufault, Associated Engineering, described the revisions made to the internal planning, and Keith Melville, Architect, briefly reviewed the architectural response. In summary, Mr. Smith said they have worked hard to accommodate the Panel's previous suggestions and the GVRD is very pleased with the project. Don Brynildsen, Assistant City Engineer, confirmed that Engineering Services supports the GVRD's process in bringing this application forward.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this submission and thought the applicant had responded very well to its previous concerns. The Panel found the design considerably improved and suggested a number of further improvements.
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The Panel appreciated the interior being opened up more to view from the street. It was stressed that the public display program will need to be carefully considered, including how the windows are resolved in terms of operation and mullions location with respect to eye level, etc. Some Panel members recommended involving the Public Art Committee in the interpretive component as well as the content. Some concerns were expressed at the suggestion of displaying children's art for this building.

The Panel questioned the use of spandrel glass and recommended lightening up the colour palette which is found too dark and heavy as currently presented.

There was disappointment with the treatment of the plaza given it is the terminus of the CPR right-of-way pedestrian corridor. Notwithstanding the need to deal with underground equipment, it was thought to be a lost opportunity not to make a bold technological statement. One Panel member recommended the furniture colour should be subdued.

A Panel member recommended improvement to the north façade given the waterfront aspect.

The Panel expressed appreciation for the sincere effort made by the applicant to deal with the Panel's previous concerns. It was acknowledged that there remains a challenge in dealing with the heritage context and striving to satisfy a number of stakeholders. Two Panel members remained disappointed that the architectural expression failed to exemplify a more contemporary approach to pump station design and did not support the application, particularly given the significant encroachment being sought.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Brynildsen said the suggestion regarding the public art process will be considered. Mr. Dufault added, the GVRD believes this is a very contemporary design and it will be a very special station, noting also that they are working in a heritage setting. With respect to the landscape, he stressed that the pocket park is an operational zone requiring access by very heavy vehicles. He said he appreciated the Panel's comments and they will work to make the scheme better.

3.	Address:	2201 Ash Street
	DE:	407961
	Use:	Residential (35 units)
	Zoning:	FM-1
	Applicant Status:	Complete
	Architect:	Ankenman Marchand
	Owner:	Nystar Developments Ltd.
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Francois Marchand, Nicholus Santorelli, Sheridan MacRae
	Staff:	James Boldt

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-8)

- **Introduction:** James Boldt, Planner, presented this application in the FM-1 zone, located at Ash Street and 6th Avenue. The site comprises four lots and has a frontage of 200 ft. and a depth of 113 ft. The proposal is for a multiple dwelling comprising 35 units: 14 three-level townhouses facing 6th Avenue, 16 two-level units and five one-level units. The building configuration is a U-shape fronting on 6th Avenue and opening up to the south with a central building element bisecting the enclosed area into two 34 ft. wide north-south oriented courtyards. The east courtyard is higher to clear the underground parking entrance and the west side is lower to relate to the front street grade. Multiple dwelling is a conditional use in the FM-1 zone and an all-residential proposal will be considered by the Director of Planning provided the impacts of 6th Avenue can be mitigated. The application complies with the FM-1 height and setback requirements and seeks the maximum density of 1.5 FSR. The maximum density may be earned by good design, public amenity, compliance with the FM-1 guidelines, adequacy of open space, and the overall size of the site. In 1996, an application was approved for this site which did not proceed. It proposed residential units in conjunction with retail at grade along 6th Avenue. A proposal to rezone the site to C-3A was not supported by the City.

As a means of mitigating the impact of 6th Avenue, staff are recommending a 12 ft. setback (similar to what is achieved in Downtown South) as well as a double row of trees, one on City property and one on the development site. The advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- the general massing and character including compatibility with the neighbours, the articulation of the smaller units, and the Ash Street elevation;
 - livability and outdoor amenity areas;
 - materials.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Sheridan MacRae briefly described the design rationale and noted they have gone to great lengths to respect the neighbours to the south. The design team responded to the Panel's questions.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel was unable to support this application, having serious concerns about the form of development.

The Panel liked the contemporary approach to the architectural expression which it found very interesting and supportable.

There were concerns expressed about the livability of the courtyard spaces which were found to be very narrow and not very usable. Several Panel members thought there should be a general outdoor amenity area for the use of all the residents of the development. There was

also a suggestion to consider eliminating the interior parapet to lessen shadowing on the courtyard.

The Panel generally found the project to be very "tight", although several Panel members did not believe that 1.5 FSR was not achievable in a different configuration. There were concerns expressed about the arrangement of the spaces resulting in unacceptable light wells and overviews from bedrooms, rendering the units unlivable. Several Panel members thought the corridor should be opened up to be able to see right through to the north. There was a suggestion to mirror the massing of the project immediately to the south.

There were suggestions to revisit the colour scheme and consider something darker. The pale grey may not be the best choice for the Vancouver climate.

The Panel had serious concerns about the excessive use of hardipanel, noting the lack of experience with this material over the long term and the need to seriously consider its detailing. Given the amount of density being sought, the Panel felt strongly that the quality of the materials should be improved, as called for in the regulations.

There was a recommendation to shift the location of the garbage receptacles away from the axis of the open space of the project to the south.

It was acknowledged that the newly introduced setback on 6th Avenue is awkward to deal with and the proportion and distribution of the spaces along the 6th Avenue frontage will need special attention. A double row of trees was strongly supported, with a suggestion to consider pairing the trees rather than offsetting them.

- **Applicant's Response:** Nicholus Santorelli of Nystar noted that 1.5 FSR was approved for this site in 1996. Mr. MacRae suggested the recent change in setback requirements may be causing difficulties with the patio spaces. However, he did not believe the courtyards are very much different to the scheme approved previously and Mr. Marchand said they are intended to be circulation spaces. This arrangement also contributes to noise attenuation from 6th Avenue. He said the materials are intended to be modern and urban and the hardipanel is better than standard siding for a wood frame building such as this. It also works well for the style they are trying to achieve.