
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: November 13, 2002

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Helen Besharat
Jeffrey Corbett
Gerry Eckford
Richard Henry
Reena Lazar
Stuart Lyon
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss

REGRETS: Joseph Hruda
Kim Perry
Maurice Pez

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. 2107 West 45th Avenue

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| 1. Address: | 2107 West 45th Avenue |
| DA: | 407070 |
| Use: | Mixed |
| Zoning: | C-2 |
| Application Status: | Complete |
| Architect: | W.T. Leung |
| Owner: | Canir Developments |
| Review: | First |
| Delegation: | Wing Ting Leung, Bob McGilvray, Lena Chorobik |
| Staff: | Bob Adair |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application for a 4-storey mixed-use development at the corner of West Boulevard and West 45th Avenue. The application proposes commercial-retail use at grade with three storeys of residential above. Underground parking is accessed from the lane at the rear. Proposed FSR is 2.63 and the height is within the 40 ft. permitted outright in the C-2 zone. Neighbouring zoning context is C-2 on West Boulevard and single family RS zone behind. The Panel's input is sought in response to Council policy which calls for high quality architectural design and materials in the C-2 zone. Planning staff consider the scheme to be well thought out with good materials which include brick masonry to the third floor and metal panel above. In accordance with the C-2 guidelines, the massing steps back at the rear to make a reasonably good transition to the neighbouring RS zone.

Staff concerns are relatively minor. The Panel's advice is sought in the following areas:

- the height of the ground floor retail space in terms of its viability at less than 10 ft.;
- whether the number of openings at the rear should be reduced, possibly combining the loading and parking access;
- whether there should be a reduction in the massing at the rear corner of the building;
- ground floor elevations: canopy design, residential entry treatment and whether there should be some special corner treatment.

The guidelines indicate that in order to qualify for any increase in height over the outright permitted 40 ft. (from base surface) there must be a site cross-fall of at least 5 ft. and that the building be of concrete construction, neither of which applies to this proposal.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Wing Leung, Architect, acknowledged the height of the commercial space is low but said it is necessary in order to meet the height envelope. He said they would also prefer not to have steps in the corridor. He noted that most of the existing commercial on this part of West Boulevard is small scale and a number of them are offices. Lena Chorobik, Landscape Architect, briefly reviewed the landscape plan and the design team responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application. Panel members generally found it to be a handsome building and considered its simple, modern expression very appropriate for the neighbourhood. The Panel liked the material selection.
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The Panel had concerns about the height of the retail space. A comment was that it is unfortunate to force the building down to the 40 ft. limit because a extra foot of height would make for far better retail space which is better for the community. With respect to the criteria for permitting a height relaxation, one Panel member noted that while a 5 ft. slope does not exist on this site, these days a frame building can be fully non combustible, which might satisfy the criterion calling for concrete construction. One Panel member thought the livability of the residential should take precedence over any adjustments to the retail space. A suggestion from another Panel member was to step back the retail a couple of metres and lower the foundation a metre in order to avoid stepping the residential component and still stay within the 40 ft. limit.

The majority of Panel members recommended taking another look at the parapet, finding its slope too subtle to be effective. Suggestions included: dropping the area over the balcony to make a more recognizable break at that point in the building, eliminating the metal panel and making it a simple, all-brick building if a substantial break cannot be achieved, stepping towards the corner element, and changing the window modules at the top. The Panel felt strongly that a big corner gesture would be inappropriate on this building, noting the many poor examples of corner treatment that exist throughout the city. One Panel member thought some interest could be added to the corner at street level.

There was considerable concern expressed about the ground plane treatment, in particular with respect to the canopies. In general, the Panel thought the level of treatment at ground level should be elevated in keeping with the rest of the building and with this neighbourhood. Certainly, a higher grade of canopy should be considered, with appropriate detailing and lighting contributing to an interesting retail experience and pedestrian environment. The exit from the retail on 45th Avenue was also of some concern because it appears like a secondary doorway. It was suggested this opening be combined in some way with the residential entry. One Panel member also expressed concern about the limited scope for signage above the retail given the sharp angle of the canopy, preferring to see a couple of steps in the residential corridors in order to allow sufficient space to provide a sense of identity for the retail stores. Several Panel members also recommended eliminating the canopy over the ground floor amenity space and taking another look at the windows in this area to make it more interesting. It was also felt that the residential entry needs to be more prominent.

The parking and loading openings at the rear were of concern to the Panel and a number of suggestions were made for reducing their apparent size. Certainly, the two overhead doors side-by-side were thought to be too overwhelming as currently shown. Suggestions included stepping the two doors to add some interest and shadow lines, combining the entries, and reducing the drive aisle to 18 ft. in order to introduce a course of brick between the two openings. The Panel felt strongly that more work is necessary to create some architectural interest in this area.

There was minimal commentary about the rear massing. One Panel member saw no problem with it as proposed, and another thought little would be gained by reducing the southwest corner, which the applicant indicated would be done.

The Panel generally found the landscaping satisfactory. One Panel member questioned the appropriateness of the low planting in front of the retail and another cautioned the applicant to ensure there is sufficient irrigation where there are overhangs.

One Panel member questioned the location of the bicycle storage at the lower level of the parking garage, suggesting it would be better close to the ramp at the top.

Concern was expressed by one Panel member that a number of rooms have unacceptable outlooks, suggesting the 50 degree horizontal angle of daylight requirement is probably not being met.

- **Applicant's Response:** Bob McGilvray, Architect, said he found most of the Panel's comments quite helpful. Mr. Leung said the comments about the canopies are well taken: he agreed the standard of design at the lower level has to be improved.

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