
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: November 14, 2001

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Tom Bunting, Chair (Items 1. and 2.)
Walter Francl, Chair (Items 3. and 4.)
Jeffrey Corbett
Lance Berelowitz
Gerry Eckford
Alan Endall
Richard Henry
Joseph Hruda
Jack Lutsky
Maurice Pez (Items 1. and 2. only)
Sorin Tatomir

REGRETS: Bruce Hemstock

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1256 West Pender Street
2.	1280 Richards Street (499 Drake)
3.	798 Granville Street
4.	2095 Commissioner Street

1. Address:	1256 West Pender Street
DA:	406219
Use:	School (4 storeys)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	PBK
Owner:	Language Studies Int.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Peter Dandyk, Mark Greatrix, Art Hawkins
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, introduced this application. The proposal is for a self improvement school for international language studies, with potential commercial office at grade fronting Melville Street, in a five-storey building with a roof deck and one level of underground parking accessed from Pender Street. The site is in the Downtown District (Sub Area G) and double-fronts on West Pender Street and Melville Street within the small triangle bounded by Bute Street to the east.

Following a brief description of the proposal and the site context, Mr. Hein highlighted the areas in which the Panel's advice is sought, namely:

- general advice on the proposed architectural quality, particularly the proposed Pender rooftop form encroachment;
 - general quality of the ground plane including public realm treatment and pedestrian performance for both frontages including visual interest, weather protection and CPTED (noting the Melville patio);
 - advice on sidewall treatment noting openings on the west face;
 - general landscape advice on the rooftop treatment.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Peter Dandyk, Architect, made a brief presentation of the proposal. It was noted it has not been possible for the developer to assemble a larger parcel.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application and generally found it to be a high quality, nicely executed project. Some Panel members commented that they found it difficult to assess the project from an urban design perspective because of the lack of interface analysis with the adjoining lots. It was recommended that some further study be undertaken as to how this block might be developed.

The Panel agreed the westerly side wall is likely to remain exposed for some time. Given its prominence, the Panel strongly recommended more glazing on this elevation. It is already quite lively and fun but more could be done to further increase its animation. Suggestions included more slotted windows and irregular shaped windows. Another suggestion was to consider reversing the angle of the side walls.

It was noted, the north and south facades seem to be completely mirrored, without distinguishing their differing orientations. Perhaps some consideration should be given to distinguish them, e.g.,

acknowledging the afternoon sun on the south facade. There was also a suggestion to include some sun protection along the south facade.

The Panel strongly supported having a usable roof deck which it was felt would be very well used by the students. In general, the Panel thought the roof treatment should be taken further to make it as attractive as possible for the students to congregate. Even if it is not possible to provide more habitable space on the roof, necessitating a second exit, the planting should be maximized. Several Panel members commented that this will be a very valuable space and having greater usability should be seriously considered.

The Panel supported the proposed rooftop encroachment and considered it a good addition to the building. Several Panel members suggested it should be bigger and more integrated with the building.

It was thought it should extend across the full width of the property on the Pender Street side, with a strengthening of the side wall pillars at that point. The element on the Melville Street side was also thought to be too small.

With respect to the ground plane, the Panel had concerns about the recessed area on Melville Street, with several Panel members recommending that it would be best to fill it in. If it is left open, there are CPTED issues that will need to be addressed. The recess as proposed is too dark and in its present form presents a security risk. One suggestion was to consider an operable glass wall along the property line that could be left open during the day. Another comment was that there could be a security problem associated with the adjacent property, suggesting the adjoining property owner is asked to consider a security gate at the property line.

- **Applicant's Response:** Regarding the urban context, Mr. Dandyk noted they have looked at and analysed what the future context might be but there is no clarity about what might occur on adjacent properties. Mr. Hein noted that in the coming month or so staff will work with the applicant to do a little more detailed study, noting the irregular shape of the site, to see what it can accommodate in terms of parking given uses and density that might be available, notwithstanding some transfer potential.

2. Address:	1280 Richards Street (499 Drake)
DA:	406223
Use:	Residential
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	Brook Development Planning/Wiens-Suzuki
Owner:	Grace Residences Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Chuck Brook, Karen Wiens-Suzuki, James Schouw, Eva Lee
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (4-6)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, introduced this preliminary application. The proposal, located on Richards Street at Drake, is for a market residential development comprising a 26-storey tower and a 6-storey townhouse podium on Richards Street. The proposal builds and expands on a previously-approved development permit at 499 Drake Street, currently under construction, which is now considered Phase 1 of the overall development. The two sites are now under the same ownership and have a combined site frontage of 237.5 ft. which enables a development of up to 5.0 FSR residential and 300 ft. height. The development now under construction was limited to 70 ft. height and 3.0 FSR. The Panel's advice is sought on Guideline performance and general compatibility with Phase 1. Advice is also sought on the interface with the Metropolis/Canadian Linen development as well as the tower form being proposed. In summary, the proposal seeks to explore, with the inclusion of Phase 1, the possibility of a development with an overall FSR of 5.0 with a 300 ft. tower. The application's overall proposal, including the portion previously approved, will be evaluated against the guidelines as if it were a new application for the entire frontage, including phase one.

Mr. Hein briefly reviewed the site context, noting the siting of the 29-storey Metropolis tower was driven by the retention of the heritage Canadian Linen building. In addition to 25-storey towers at 1295 and 1225 Richards Street and a 32-storey tower at 1238 Seymour, there is a new Downtown South park proposed at Davie Street.

The City has agreed in principle to link the two sites although consolidation is not being pursued. The intent is to maintain two separate legal parcels but link them by single site covenant to the FSR. (Note: In his presentation, the applicant advised the developer is now considering site consolidation.) Parking access will be from the lane and will be shared by the two parcels. The intent is to expand the ground plane and podium treatment of the first phase into this additional portion of the site. The proposed new tower is a very slim tower form and the podium is 6 storeys and a partial 7th storey, with two ground oriented townhouses fronting Richards Street. The podium massing is terraced at the Metropolis property line.

Mr. Hein briefly reviewed the Downtown South Guidelines against which this proposal is being evaluated and which the Panel is asked to consider, again noting that this is a preliminary submission including phase one as if it was not approved and under construction. The advice of the Panel is sought specifically in the following areas:

- general comments on the overall proposition, particularly the approach to massing of the podium vs. the tower, noting the “mirroring” or extension of the 70 ft. phase one podium yielding a symmetrical arrangement;
 - tower placement specifically along the street and within the precinct noting the constraints imposed by the Canadian Linen building and its required tower position and the desired performance of adequate spacing between approved and anticipated buildings to ensure private views;
 - transition in massing to the Canadian Linen podium;
 - overall expression, noting a continuation of the architectural approach from the corner approved phase into the balance of the podium and the tower itself (mentioning that staff are aware of industry concerns with development approvals sometimes yielding too consistent, homogenous and predictable tower forms. Comments on materials and detailing also welcomed;
 - the height and tower slimness specifically;
 - extent of open space and related quality with respect to both hard and softscape noting the unique landscape approach with an anticipated lush quality for the internal courtyard of the corner phase.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Chuck Brook noted the developer is now considering a phased strata approach, with the two sites combined in a single parcel, rather than the original proposal which was for a single site covenant. He explained, the developer has been able to acquire more of the adjacent site to provide an opportunity to pursue the full 5.0 FSR. Mr. Brook noted they have had considerable discussions with City staff in bringing this application forward. He reviewed the project rationale in detail, followed by a general discussion between the project team and Panel members.
 - **Panel’s Comments:** The Panel did not support this application. The Panel was very split in its general acceptance of this project, and there were differing opinions about whether this project is required to “earn” the 5.0 FSR given the required site frontage for 5.0 FSR/300 ft. but noting a portion of that already under construction that is presented as a “given”. The Panel agreed this is a very complex and challenging proposal.

General comments:

- given the design for this project will rely heavily on its execution and to the ultimate positioning of this tower on the skyline of the city, there is nervousness because there are very few successful projects in this sort of eclectic style;
- it was questioned whether the symmetrical composition on the site is important - in trying to integrate this project with the corner development already under construction the symmetry will largely be lost;
- don’t see the urban design benefit of considering the two sites as one - this is not the solution we would be looking at if the overall site had been considered as one site from the beginning. It feels like a project that is trying to appear as integrated but in doing so is ending up with some very awkward and torturous grade level conditions, etc.;
- a difficult project to talk about but commend the applicant for making it very clear that this is what he wants to do and this is his taste;
- in terms of the massing approach I have a hard time reading where the 5.0 FSR and 300 ft. height is being earned. From an urban design point of view I can see no real merit in going the extra 2 FSR if this is the result. For example, there is no advantage to the first phase in what is being proposed on phase two. Nor does phase one help phase two as a context. Rather, phase one is a

- very interiorized project oriented towards the corner and which essentially presents a blank wall to phase two, so it in no way completes an ensemble, except superficially;
- there is a fundamental issue of whether this application has earned the 5.0 FSR and I see no compelling evidence to show that it has;
 - this is a different sort of tower and it's great - there are too many towers in this area that are coming from the same perspective (i.e., 3-storey podiums);
 - have some unease with the so called symmetry of the project;
 - the project is exuberant in the landscape, architecture and the concept;
 - an interesting proposal which examines a lot of downtown principles. The approach of putting more mass in the lower base than the tower is interesting. The overall approach has a lot to commend it. It is a good use of land and the development industry would be very encouraging in this respect;
 - the symmetry is no problem. It's quite a provocative solution and the Downtown South is starting to become very similar in its scale. There is also a lot of eclecticism, with one, three-, five- and seven-storey bases as part of the evolving character. This block is a particularly eclectic and a bit of an anomaly. The anomalies are important in our experience of the city;
 - applaud the developer for questioning the conventional wisdom of letting economics drive the streetscape of the Downtown South;
 - we need more buildings in the 6 storey scale;
 - the general massing and the urban design logic vis-a-vis the chequerboard patterning has been masterfully handled;
 - as a response to the overall urban design guidelines that establish the nature of the form of development it has done a really good job - I like the idea that it has pushed the limit and questioned the uniformity dictated by the guidelines which has resulted in a predictable urban fabric of 30 ft. street wall;

Tower placement: There was consensus that the proposed tower placement works. Some of the comments were:

- if this was being considered as one site from the beginning this (or very close to it) is probably where a tower would be sited;
- the rationale for the location of the tower relative to the emerging surrounding context is well explained and justified;
- the rationale for the location of the buildings and their impact is well founded;
- the tower placement is well considered and supportable;

Massing transition: Most Panel members thought the transition with the Metropolis could be more sensitively handled. The comments included:

- would like to see at least an alternate configuration considered where the street wall is kept more in scale with the Metropolis;
- question the strategy of a symmetrical higher podium right across in terms of an urban design context response to the Canadian Linen podium - would rather see it a quite asymmetrical approach where it could drop down substantially on the west;
- some of the density should be pushed up into the tower. The elevations are self-serving because they show this as a stand-alone piece but in reality the podium level is weighted heavily in the context of the entire streetscape. There should be an opportunity to make a transition down to the existing Canadian Linen building both in terms of massing and perhaps even stylistically - if not throughout the whole project, at least at the podium level;

- not necessary to maintain the 70 ft. level podium all the way across; it is more important to make a gesture to the Metropolis and step is down a bit and make the connection between those two buildings a little bit more transitional and less abrupt;
- seven storeys may be too much but I see no problem to being a bit more sensitive to the Metropolis, starting at 6 storeys and dropping to five or four;
- question the 7 storeys which could overwhelm the streets but certainly 5 or 6 is within a comfortable limit;
- it would be worthwhile to push a little bit of that density into the tower. I certainly wouldn't hurt the development;
- do not support the massing of the podium as it abuts the adjoining Metropolis building. This transition is quite uncomfortable;

Height and slinness of the tower:

- it would not be to the detriment of the project if some of the lower mass could be transferred to the tower; some slenderness would be lost but the tower could stand it;
- there could definitely be some development of the tower proportions;
- you could very easily add density to the tower and still have a very shapely, well proportioned and slim tower. It could be done without compromising the optimum distance between the adjacent building and, at the same time, it would improve the lower element where it butts up against its neighbour to the west;
- suggest the tower could go a little wider higher up in the building, taking more mass from the street level;
- fully support the notion of the taller and slimmer a tower, in general;
- the slenderness and height of the tower is commendable - the slimmer and taller, the better;
- support the width of the tower as proposed; it's just the right size and in the right position;

Architectural style:

- the overall expression is a matter of taste - it's not to my taste but that is not at issue;
- the articulation and the proportioning of the tower is too busy and too complex - the transition from the 4,500 sq.ft. floor plate at the lower portion of the tower to the very small 1,400 sq.ft. plate at the top is awkward and works against what could be a very tall, elegantly proportioned tower;
- while the question of taste may not be relevant for this Panel, what is relevant is what it has to do with its context from an urban design point of view ... concerned about this becoming a kind of Disneyland sort of street of various styles or stylized interpretations. So it is legitimate to comment about the style because it doesn't pick up on anything that relates to its context in terms of the style. The architectural expression is quite curious for the context. Would prefer a much more muted and much less convoluted built form, especially in this area of fairly high density;
- there are too many of the same towers in Downtown South - a different kind or expression both in the tower and the podium would be welcome;
- this building depends on careful detailing - perhaps a little less exuberance and not necessarily taking a European style for everything - there's a lot to be said for something that develops within this context rather than importing something foreign;
- we need a diversity of buildings and this creates a little drama and romance. Would like to see it again in more detail. The overall architectural expression it is not my personal taste but I find it quite intriguing;
- don't know where the language of this building is coming from except from someone's imagination. There is no clear historical language and no reference to any historical influences within its immediate or greater context;

- it is an historical pastiche of architectural influences that is nothing more than kitsch. It has the potential of being an eyesore of landmark proportions. Its function, land use and location are not appropriate for a landmark. The architectural expression and use of materials are totally foreign and out of sync with all the rest of the hard work that's gone into Downtown South;

Open space:

- it conforms to the guidelines along the street;
 - notwithstanding the European type feel of the courtyard of the first phase corner development, there will not be much light in there;
 - there is nothing about this proposal that integrates it with the corner site, nor do the two combined create any added benefit to the ground plane open space development;
 - difficulty understanding the open space design - there is a lot of confusion about what is private, semi private and public;
 - opposed to the policy of treating the lane as a very formal entrance rather than the street;
 - there seems to be a conflict in the geometries and shape of the floor plan vs. the design at the ground plane, e.g., the offset entrance is quite uncomfortable in its relationship to the actual driveway and the patterning of the landscaping on the axis of the central passageway; also have a problem with how the three ground floor townhouse units facing into the lane work with or against that patterning;
 - very difficult to understand the plans. I don't see any real effort to integrate the two buildings. Although the envelope has been integrated to make it appear as one project, in effect it's two separate projects;
 - the open space will be shadier than you might think - have some concern over the amount of shade in the rear open space;
 - there are some very nice qualities to it but unfortunately the rendering makes it difficult to read;
 - concerns with the connection to phase one. I don't think it connects very well at all. Something should be done to look at the phase one building to try and make the street come all the way through rather than being quite so convoluted;
 - phase one doesn't seem to have been designed to ever enter into this project and I think more could be done to do that;
 - further development is needed to both the open spaces;
 - the private open spaces on the roof look very interesting on the elevation but they are not well developed in plan. The private open spaces on the ground floor units also need further development;
 - in many ways this project is much better and more livable than other projects; it certainly orients the housing to the lane and it might work quite well;
 - development of the roof gardens is a good idea;
 - there is a fair amount of work to be done on the open space as it relates to the ground plane and roof terraces etc. but given this is a preliminary a lot of work has already been done;
 - rather like the heroic passageway through the base of the tower - think it will be quite an interesting space;
 - the organization of the ground plane on the lane side and the very convoluted courtyard entry of the existing piece already under construction is quite troubling.
- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Brook expressed surprise about some of the discussion as to whether the tower has earned the FSR, noting the concept of earning the full FSR is not official from a regulatory point of view in this zone. Nonetheless, the Panel's comments are still valid. The importance of the commentary was the validation of the tower placement analysis. The comments on the transition to the Metropolis are also very valid and this will be explored along with the opportunity to add a little to

the height of the tower, noting the parapet is well below 300 ft. As well, to re-explore the proportioning of the tower when looking at moving density from the podium to the tower. With respect to the discussion of style, Mr. Brook said he shared some of the concerns about uniformity and a certain blandness that is evolving in downtown Vancouver. It is the oddities that make our cities attractive, not the conformance with guidelines. While many architects might not design a building in this style, there is room for buildings like this in the city because they add difference and richness and challenge the guidelines.

- **Staff Clarification:** Mr. Hein explained that with the addition of the additional 100 ft. the site qualifies under the guidelines for the full 5.0 FSR. The evaluation is whether or not the proposition performs against the guidelines which, in some respects, are being challenged. The Development Permit Board will be the ultimate decision maker and the advice of the Panel will be reported to the Board. Mr. Hein acknowledged that staff are finding this to be a challenging application, particularly given the constraints (or opportunities) posed by the existing corner development.

3. Address:	798 Granville Street
DA:	406153
Use:	Retail (4 storeys)
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Studio One
Owner:	Bonnis Properties (Robson) Inc.
Review:	Second
Delegation:	Tomas Wolf
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application, noting the Panel did not support the proposal in its previous review on October 3, 2001. Mr. Hein briefly reviewed the earlier advice of the Panel noting there was support for the retail uses at grade with a large single CRU above, although the Panel thought more work was needed on the hierarchy in distinguishing those pieces. The Panel liked the lane elevation. The general arrangement of the programme on the site was considered logical and supportable. The Panel emphasized the need for further design development on the corner and the Robson and Granville Street facades.

Mr. Hein briefly described the revisions made to the scheme since the first review and sought the Panel's advice as to whether the project has responded effectively to the Panel's previous concerns. He confirmed that the uses, general arrangement on the site and architectural approach are supportable under the zoning and guidelines. The comments of the Panel are sought in the following areas:

- design response generally, given both the prominence and the City's aspirations for a high quality development at this corner;
 - approach to form/materials/detailing on the corner;
 - the Robson Street elevation, including materials and detailing;
 - Granville Street elevation, including the 44 ft. bays, transition to the Vancouver Block, and signage and banner systems.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Tomas Wolf, Architect, had nothing to add, noting the development planner had covered all the issues.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application and commended the applicant for responding very positively to all the Panel's previous comments. The project is now much more vital and interesting, and a real showpiece for this important intersection of the downtown. The lane elevation is also very nice.

The Panel had no further suggestions to make on the proposal. However, there was a question to staff regarding the streetscape for this intersection, noting no increased street planting or better street furniture is indicated.

- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to landscaping, Mr. Wolf explained they have only shown what is there now and he is unaware of any City initiative for improvements to the streetscape.

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4. Address: 2095 Commissioner Street
DA: N/A
Use: Concrete Batch Plant
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Don Gurney
Owner: Vancouver Port Authority
Review: First
Delegation: Don Gurney, Ron Brukaug, Eva Lee, Bob Ransford, Joel Cauker
Staff: Anita Molaro
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** The Development Planner, Anita Molaro, presented this application. The site is located on Vancouver Port Authority land and is entirely within the VPA's jurisdiction. The City's existing CD-1 zoning, which extends along the Burrard Inlet waterfront from Victoria Drive to New Bright Park, is not operable on VPA lands, nor is the Vancouver Building By-law. The VPA therefore does not require development or building permits from the City in order for this project to proceed. Nevertheless, the VPA does seek the City's and the community's input before it makes a decision. This proposal will be reviewed and analysed in a process similar to that followed for all major development applications, with staff review and assessment against the CD-1 zoning. The proposal will then be reported to the Development Permit Board which will, in turn, forward its recommendations and comments to the VPA.

The site, on Commissioner Street at Victoria Drive, is adjacent to a cold storage plant which is about 77 ft. high. Ms. Molaro reviewed the site context, noting there are street-end views at the end of Oxford and Cambridge Streets. The proposed use (concrete batch plant) is permitted in the CD-1 zoning. The proposed density is well within the maximum permitted 2.0 FSR. The height permitted in this zone is 30 ft., which may be relaxed up to 100 ft. provided consideration is given to the potential impacts on the adjacent residential districts. The proposal contains several components that are over the outright height of 30 ft., including the storage bins and conveyor at 54 ft. The tallest element, the aggregate bin, is approximately 87 ft. high. The proposed administrative building, which is below 30 ft., is incorporated in the existing one-storey building on the site. The application is also proposing to remove several large trees that exist on the site and has provided a new landscape concept plan.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the requested height relaxation and any comments on the proposed siting of various elements and the view impacts from the adjacent residential areas and parks.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Don Gurney, Architect, briefly described the proposed concrete batch plant and the design rationale. Eva Lee, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plan and Bob Ransford reviewed the environmental assessment aspects of the proposal.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this proposal.

The proposed height was supported unanimously. It was noted that only a small portion of the site is over the 30 ft. outright height and the various components have been very carefully designed and sited to mitigate view impacts.

The Panel's only area of concern related to the landscaping. Given the careful measures that have been taken to mitigate dust on the site, as well as the commendable environmental restoration and enhancement work along the waterfront, it was suggested that similar effort might be devoted to containing leaves rather than removing the dozen or more mature London Plane trees that provide a significant screen for the upland residences. If the trees must be removed, it was recommended that the wall be greened up to help mitigate the loss of this landscape buffer.

The Panel unanimously supported the proposed use. Several Panel members commented that it is a very appropriate use of the City's industrial lands and a commendable addition to the waterfront.

- **Applicant's Response:** The landscape architect explained that the wall is considered a feature wall because it is Lafarge concrete. There is an evergreen hedge which could be allowed to grow higher, and ivy planting which could be allowed to grow up the wall. There is, however, a concern about security. She added, they are sensitive to the fact that many trees will be lost on the Commissioner street front. In compensation, they are proposing large (6 m) evergreen trees to be planted at the outset, to be clustered at the entrance.