

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: November 16, 2011

TIME: N/A

PLACE: N/A

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Robert Barnes
Helen Besharat (Present for Items #1 & #2)
Gregory Borowski (Excused Item #2)
James Cheng (Present for Items #1 & #2)
Jane Durante (Present for Item #1)
Jim Huffman
Arno Matis
Scott Romses
Norm Shearing

REGRETS:
Jeff Corbett
Alan Endall
Geoff McDonell

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1.	1600 Beach Avenue and 1651 Harwood Street
2.	1265-1281 Howe Street and 803-821 Drake Street
3.	688 East 18th Avenue

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Romses called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. to discuss arranging a joint meeting with the Public Art Committee on November 23rd to discuss the art piece at West Pender. He then noted the presence of a quorum and the Panel considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. **Address:** 1600 Beach Avenue and 1651 Harwood Street
DE: Rezoning
Use: To rezone 1600 Beach Avenue and 1651 Harwood Street from Multiple Residential District (RM-5A) to Comprehensive Development District (CD-1); to add a total of 137 dwelling units to these sites.
Zoning: RM-5A to CD-1
Application Status: Rezoning
Review: First
Architect: IBI/HB Architects
 Martin Bruckner, IBI/HB Architects
 Gwyn Vose, IBI/HB Architects
Delegation: David Thom, IBI/HB Architects
 Cameron Owen, IBI Group
 Robert Lemon, Robert Lemon Architects
Staff: Anita Molaro and Michael Naylor

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-1)**Introduction:**

Anita Molaro, Development Planner, noted that the Panel previously saw the application on September 21st and at that time the panel did not support the proposal. Ms. Molaro gave an overview and explained that the proposal is to rezone the site from RM-5A to CD-1 to allow an increase in the density beyond that permitted under the current zoning which is limited to 2.2 FSR. The existing sites have an FSR of 3.42. Under this proposed, the FSR is proposed to increase in density to 4.33. The previous version that the Panel saw in September was 4.35, so there is a slight reduction in floor space for this proposal. Ms. Molaro described the Policy Context noting that the rezoning can be considered under the city-wide STIR initiative to increase the amount of rental stock within the city. She added that the existing rental on the site will be retained. There is a Green Rezoning Policy where a minimum of LEED™ Gold, or equivalent, is required, and registration with CaGBC is now a requirement for this rezoning. The applicant has indicated that they can achieve 60 minimum points for LEED™ Gold.

The rezoning proposal consists of two sites, Parcel A (1600 block of Beach Avenue) and Parcel B (midblock along Harwood Street). Both sites are currently zoned RM-5A and the intent of the base zoning is to permit a variety of residential developments, with emphasis being placed on achieving development that is compatible with neighbourhood development with respect to streetscape character, open spaces, view retention, sunlight access and privacy. The proposal varies from the provisions of the base zoning by increasing the FSR which is administered through a CD-1 zoning, while the urban design intent of the base zoning is still applicable.

Ms. Molaro described the surrounding context for the site noting the higher buildings in the area. She explained that the Beach Towers was built in the 1960's and is one of Vancouver's best known and iconic rental housing complexes. The existing complex has 607 rental units in the four towers on the two sites. The existing towers range in height between 19 to 21 floors. The towers have distinct architectural expressions based on a similar sized floor plate,

geometric floor plates (cruciform, octagon or decagon in plan, full height ribbed concrete walls, and concave balconies.

Beach Towers is on the City's Recent Landmark List. While the application is not pursuing any heritage benefits (i.e. additional density in exchange for heritage upgrade/retention), staff and the applicant are working together to have the sites added to the Heritage Register.

The Panel did not support the proposal the last time. They raised a number of issues, primarily focused around massing of the Beach Street frontage and the proximity to the two towers. The Panel suggested that one way to address this was to consider inserting a break in this length. The Panel also thought there needed to be more design development for a more significant separation between Tower A and Building B. As well, design improvements to Tower B to improve the expression, height and location, and design development to the landscaping to keep a more 'park like' expression. The Panel asked for further design development to the townhouses along Harwood Street as well and on Parcel B the Panel generally supported the amount of density being proposed if the proposal could address these concerns.

Ms. Molaro described the changes since the Panel's last review noting there was a reduction of 2,000 square feet in the FSR. On Parcel A, the four storey building fronting onto Beach Avenue (no change in the height) but changes to its footprint. There has been an increase in the separation of the massing addition on the podium from the existing towers. On Tower A this separation was about 30 feet and has been increased to about 44 feet. On Tower B the increase is from 24 feet to 36 feet. This results in an overall decrease in length of the upper massing from 151 feet long to 126 feet.

Building B, the 9-storey building on Cardero Street, has a proposed height of 102 feet at the lowest point to the top of the elevator overrun. That has not generally changed from the previous proposal. The guidelines call for a setback of 24 m (79 ft.) for those buildings greater than 60 feet and less than 110 feet in height from other buildings that are also greater than 60 feet and less than 110 feet in height. However the guidelines also say this can be reduced considering the intent of the guidelines and the relationship with adjacent buildings in terms of views, privacy, light, open space or heritage.

In response to the Panel's concerns with the proximity of the Building B with Tower A, the applicant has increased the separation between the tower from 25 feet to 40 feet at the upper level. There has also been a slight change in the building footprint but the setback between Building B and Tower B is the same as previous at 72 feet.

There is also a change with the setback along Cardero Street. Previously, the proposal had a 25 feet setback. It is now being proposed to reduce that to a setback of 10 feet (referencing the existing retaining/parkade wall) a setback of 15 feet to the residential units at the lower podium floor, and stepping back again at the third level to 20 feet.

The final building on Parcel A, Building D, the amenity space at the corner, has generally remained the same. On Parcel B, the various townhouse units have been reconfigured. Previously, they were groupings of three units located on each of the blank brick walls of the existing tower. Two have remained facing on Harwood Street but a longer group of townhouses have been provided along the lane.

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

Taking into consideration aspects of the neighbourhood context that includes streetscape character, open spaces, view retention, sunlight access and privacy, including the following specific aspects, is the development proposal a supportable urban design response for these sites that have been added to the recent landmark list:

Parcel A: (4-storey townhouses along Beach Avenue, 9-storey block along Cardero Street and amenity space at the corner of Cardero Street and Beach Avenue:

- Overall buildings(s) sitting, form and massing
- Buildings(s) - height and bulk
- Relationship and proximity with existing one-site buildings - building site coverage and open space
- Buildings(s) sitting and neighbourliness including:
- The Beach Avenue frontage and podium interface response
- Cardero Street setback and public views down Cardero Street
- Views from the Harwood Street and public realm through the site across podium to English Bay
- Neighbourly view and shadow impacts
- Overall increase in density
- Increase from 3.4 FSR to 4.5 FSR
- Podium - reduction in podium open space and landscape treatments

Parcel B: (3-storey townhouse along Harwood Street and 2-storey townhouse at the rear of the site)

- Overall building(s) siting, forms and massing:
- Building(s) interface with adjacent properties
- Overall increase in density

Increase from 3.53 to 4.07 FSR

- Podium - reduction in podium open space and landscape treatments

Combined density (Parcel A and B) increase from 3.42 to 4.35 FSR

LEEDTM Gold Strategies (LEEDTM Gold and registration with CaGBC required).

Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Martin Bruckner, Architect, described the changes since the last review noting that they have taken the sawtooth effect to the massing of the townhouse units along Beach Ave.. They have reduced the townhouses from six to five above the second floor (landscaped podium level). They have improved the view through the site for the neighbours to the north and also for pedestrians coming down Harwood Street. The sawtooth is the reflection of the orthogonal grid of the west end street pattern against the geometry of Beach Ave. The mid-rise is a 9-storey building with a rectangular expression giving it a simpler articulation of walls, windows and balconies. There are some solid concrete walls echoing the walls in the heritage towers. There is a generous view corridor down Cardero Street. The biggest massing change is to the townhouse approach on the Columbia House site. They are 2-storey townhouses and are a floor lower, with access at grade so that the occupants will be able to have access through the existing landscaped courtyard. The units on the lane will have their principle windows into the courtyard for more privacy. They have increased the separation of the new units from the existing buildings which have a whole series of principle windows looking into the site.

Mr. Bruckner noted that they are introducing a new parking level in the new building with access under the new building. The parking will replace the current surface parking. The mid-rise has been reshaped along Cardero Street and the separation has been increased between this building and the existing building.

Cameron Owen, Landscape Architect, described landscape elements noting they have chosen to celebrate the relationship between the buildings that provide access for pedestrians as well as view access through the site to English Bay. These elements include vehicular entry courts, which will also double as amenity strips for residents on the site. They feature the existing heritage sculptural pieces and will be relocated into the corridor public realm areas. They have also included community gardening in raised planters. As well, a children's play area is included with some seating located at important view points. A green roof is planned for the roof of the amenity building. New paving materials are proposed along with additional trees.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

- Design development to Building B to be more distinct in character from the existing buildings while also addressing its overall proportions and bulkiness;
- Design development to the ground plane to maintain its porosity including the relocation of the existing public art sculpture while simplifying the ground plane patterned geometry
- Design development regarding bicycle circulation on the site;
- Consider improving the parkade wall with new materials;

Related Commentary:

The Panel supported the proposal and thought it was much improved since the last review.

The Panel thought that removing one of the Beach Avenue townhouse modules had helped to open up the space. They appreciated that the diagonal view lines had been improved. The Panel also appreciated the new proposed laneway townhouse in Parcel B. The Panel thought the scalloped balconies on Building B were too literal in reference to the existing heritage tower, and thought it should be part of the family rather than taking a literal approach to the existing towers. The Panel did not support attaching townhouses to the tower noting that the tower should be simple like the other towers and suggested that the density could be deployed elsewhere on the site.

The Panel thought the Building B still needed some design development as they thought the proportions were still too heavy.

Although the Panel generally supported of the amenity building last time, some Panel members thought some design development could make it an interesting component on the site. One Panel member suggested it could be a real jewel but needed some further attention.

The Panel thought that the move to preserve the parkade wall wasn't the right move. They thought that since it was a new building it should give a new expression for the parkade entrance/walls.

Several Panel members noted that the landscape and architectural treatment needs to be of a high quality and that some work still needed to be done to get to the high quality standard that is required on this prominent site.

Several Panel members suggested that the applicant needs to take a closer look at bicycle circulation on the site including how to get to the bike lockers and getting back up to the ground plane.

The Panel supported the landscape plans but thought the diagonals in the ground plane could be simpler, with one Panel member noting that the paved diagonals in the entry court might be confusing and suggested changing the surface materials. Most of the Panel thought the

placement of the public art should be reconsidered, and that the existing fountains should be used as a form of place making on the ground plane.

Applicant's Response:

Mr. Bruckner said they appreciated the Panel's comments and would take them under consideration as they try to make the scheme better.

2.	Address:	1265-1281 Howe Street and 803-821 Drake Street
	DE:	N/A
	Use:	To construct a 41-storey residential tower with a 7-storey podium with commercial uses and artist production space at grade.
	Zoning:	DD to CD-1
	Application Status:	Rezoning
	Review:	First
	Architect:	Merrick Architecture
	Owner:	Howe Street Developments Greg Borowski, Merrick Architecture
	Delegation:	Joseph Kardum, Merrick Architecture Chris Mramor, Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg Tracy McRae, Howe Street Developments Ltd.
	Staff:	Anita Molaro and Karen Hoese

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

Introduction:

Karen Hoese, Rezoning Planner, introduced the proposal for a new rezoning application for a mixed-use development at Howe and Drake Streets. The site currently includes several two and four storey commercial buildings, a 3-storey rental building with eleven SRO rooms and a single family house. The purpose of the application is to rezone the site from Downtown District to a Comprehensive Development District to allow an increase in the density and the height beyond what is permitted under the current zoning. Ms. Hoese discussed the DTS policy which allows consideration of rezoning proposals where increased height up to the underside of view corridors that would achieve public benefits. The proposal is for a 41-storey tower which will include 348 residential units of which 20 are secured market rental, commercial floor area along Drake Street, a cultural facility with 17 artist production spaces on Howe Street, which is the public benefit being proposed. Ms. Hoese explained that, in addition, all rezoning applications are subject to the Green Rezoning Policy which required that rezonings achieve LEED™ Gold, with specific emphasis on optimized energy performance, and that they are eligible to certify upon completion of the project.

Anita Molaro, Development Planner, described the context for the area, and indicated other developments in the area. The artist production space immediately adjacent to the social housing facility is a two storey component with some residential townhouses above. The retail component warps around from Howe Street to Drake Street. The rental units are located on the second floor with the remainder of the building as market units. The applicant has completed a comprehensive site plan/tower placement analysis to figure out where the building could sit relative to all the neighbouring buildings. The location of the tower addresses the neighbourly impacts from other buildings. The proposal has also met the Downtown South Hornby Guideline setbacks and the streetwall massing intent. The one aspect of the Guidelines that it doesn't quite conform to is for compact slim towers with small floor plates, to minimize shadowing and maximize separation and views between buildings, and to reduce privacy and overlook. The Guidelines call for a maximum of 6500 square feet for the floors above the podium level. This proposal is slightly more than that at 6838 square feet between levels 9 and 18, yet above level eighteen it is within the parameters. Ms. Molaro noted that staff are supportive of the floor plate size. The proposal needs to meet LEED™ Gold.

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

- Does the site and the proposal (form of development) support the additional height (375 feet) and density being sought for a total FSR of 9.58?
- Is the tower placement (separation from other buildings) and tower form (dimensional attributes and floor plate size), supportable within the context of the Guidelines in achieving a neighbourly urban design response taking into consideration privacy, views and the intent for slim towers in Downtown South?
- Other comments sought from the Panel:
- Public realm/street wall response for the Howe Street and Drake Street frontages;
- Lane interface;
- Landscape treatment.
- LEED™ Gold Strategies (LEED™ Gold and registration with CaGBC required and eligible to certify upon completion).

Ms. Hoese and Ms. Molaro took questions from the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Greg Borowski, Architect, further described the proposal noting the placement of the tower allowed for a good location for the amenity space. As well they added artist's studios around a central atrium. They are double height studios, and along Howe Street there will be a large display area that will be primary work space for the artists. The podium at level 5 will have a number of two storey townhouses. He added that they are extending the character of the landscape right up to the elevator core. They are enlivening the corner of Howe and Drake Street with retail with the use of a café. The porte cochere allows access to the underground parking and place to drop off visitors to the building. A common amenity space is planned for the top of the tower. Mr. Borowski described the sustainability strategy and indicated that they will be using radiant hot water, horizontal shading primarily on the south corner, shading on the west side with the use of larger balconies, and mostly solid walls on the east and north side to provide better thermal performance.

Chris Mramor, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans and mentioned that there will be a single row of street trees on both Howe and Drake Streets. There is a connection from Howe Street to the lane. A green wall is being proposed in the Porte cochere and will extend up to level 5 and then becomes a lattice or screening for that level. On the townhouses above the artist's studios is another proposed green wall. The corner will have a hedge with an entry gate for the café. On the podium level there are two gardens planned. The south garden has an amenity terrace with a fitness centre and children's play area. Each townhouse will have a private garden. The upper levels will be mostly intensive green space.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

- Consider using different material treatments for the artist's studio from the rest of the building;
- Consider introducing more variety of single and double height spaces for the artist's studios;
- Consider bringing the landscaping out into the streetscape.

Related Commentary:

The Panel supported the proposal and congratulated the applicant on a job well done.

The Panel supported the height, density and use, and they thought the placement of the tower was in the right location. They also supported the larger floor plate and thought the height and slenderness ratio made for an elegant tower. A couple of Panel members thought there

should be a different material on the tower from the rest of the project. One Panel member thought the north and east elevation on the tower was underdeveloped and encouraged the applicant to take some more risks with the design.

The Panel thought the public realm was generally well handled and thought the introduction of the artist's studios could be an exciting component. Several Panel members suggested that the studios get treated differently as they didn't have to have the same vocabulary as the rest of the project. Also there was a suggestion that the project could be less predictable and more artful. Several Panel members thought the artist's studios could have more variety in size with larger and smaller spaces as well as both double and single height and as well a workshop space could be added.

One Panel member thought the landscape treatment should move out into the streetscape more and suggested the corner treatment could be open to the street perhaps with some seating.

The Panel congratulated the applicant on the public art component and thought the amount of money they have to spend would make for an interesting and exciting art piece.

The Panel liked that the applicant was pursuing LEED™ Gold noting that the glazing strategies would be the key to achieving that rating. A couple of Panel members thought the use of the balconies as shading devices was well done. One panel member encouraged the applicant to consider slab extension insulation.

Applicant's Response:

Mr. Borowski thanked the Panel for some great comments. Regarding the sustainability strategy he noted that they are still going through it with the emerging codes and will be doing energy modeling. Ms. McRae also thanked the Panel for their comments. She added that they want the project to be something special.

3.	Address:	688 East 18th Avenue
	DE:	415118
	Use:	To construct a new 4-storey building having commercial and parking on the ground level and a total of 12 dwelling units on the upper three floors.
	Zoning:	C-2
	Application Status:	Complete
	Review:	First
	Architect:	Mathew Cheng Architects
	Delegation:	Mathew Cheng, Mathew Cheng Architects Rebecca Colter, DMG Landscape Architects
	Staff:	Marie Linehan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (4-2)

Introduction:

Marie Linehan, Development Planner, introduced a development permit application for a new mixed use building. She noted that it is a corner site at Fraser Street and East 18th Avenue. Ms. Linehan described the context along Fraser Street noting there are mostly older 2-storey commercial buildings. The proposal is for a 4-storey building with commercial at grade and three storeys of residential above. The units will be a mixture of one and two bedroom units. The residential entry is from East 18th Avenue. Ms. Linehan added that the site has a high water table and makes excavation for underground parking limited. The access to the parking will be at the lane with a ramp down to one level of underground parking and a ramp up to a second level of parking above grade.

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

- the overall design, architectural expression, detailing and materials as this is a conditional application;
- the treatment of the north façade adjacent the above grade parking;
- the treatment of the rear elevation and service areas at the lane, noting that these areas may be further enclosed to provide a potential roof deck area.

Ms. Linehan took questions from the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Matthew Cheng, Architect, further described the proposal noting the use of brick with a different treatment on the residential entry to differentiate from the commercial entries. The top floor is setback on both sides according the C-2 Bylaw.

Rebecca Colter, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans. She noted that there isn't a lot of landscaping for the proposal. She added that there are two variations of evergreen shrubs planned along the street frontage to block the garbage enclosure. As well green screens are proposed and some greenery on the 2nd floor amenity space.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

- Design development to the concrete band;
 - Design development to the landscape plans around the garbage enclosure;
 - Design development to the 4th floor penthouses;
 - Consider lightening up the roof fascia.
-

Related Commentary:

The Panel supported the proposal and thought it was a pretty straight forward project.

The Panel thought that the concrete band between the ground floor and the upper floors was a bit too heavy and strong. One Panel member noted that it needed to be interrupted to allow the bays to come through. Also, the upper storey needs to be lightened up with the addition of more glazing. One Panel member suggested more detailing to the soffits.

The Panel thought the way the parking was handled was clever but they were concerned with the screening around the parking and garbage enclosure. One Panel member noted that if the vines aren't maintained over time the area could get messy. It was suggested that the applicant find some other materials rather than climbing vines, such as a wood enclosure that can be detailed carefully. Also they felt the material should be wrapped around the corner.

Several Panel members thought there should be glazing in the stair well since the occupants might chose to use them more often than the elevator being that the building doesn't have a lot of floors. One panel member suggested extending the glass up to the soffits in the retail space as place to put cut out signs, rather than cheap box signs.

The Panel thought the top floor lacked any excitement or visual interest. They thought the heavy fascia wasn't helping, and suggested making it thinner and more refined. One Panel member noted that there was an opportunity to provide some deck space for the penthouses which should be explored.

Some Panel members were disappointed that there were no landscape plans included in the applicant's package.

Applicant's Response:

Mr. Cheng thanked the Panel for their comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.