

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: November 18, 2009

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Mark Ostry, Chair
Gerry Eckford
Jane Durante (Excused Item #3)
David Godin
Richard Henry
Oliver Lang
Steve McFarlane
Douglas Watts

REGRETS:
Martin Nielsen
Bruce Haden
Vladimir Mikler
Maurice Pez

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	709 East 39 th Avenue
2.	1240 Howe Street
3.	1401 Comox Street
4.	2528 Maple Street (Pulse)
5.	Downtown Capacity & View Corridors Study

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Nielsen 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.

1. Address: 709 East 39th Avenue
 DE: 413275
 Description: To construct a 4-storey mixed use building with commercial/residential on the main floor and residential on the 2nd to 4th floors.
 Zoning: C-2
 Application Status: Complete
 Review: First
 Owner: W. R. Chandler Memorials LTD
 Architect: Rostich Hemphill + Associates Architects
 Delegation: Keith Hemphill, Rostich Hemphill + Associates Architects
 Jonathan Losee, Rostich Hemphill + Associates Architects
 John O'Donnell, Ledingham McAllister
 Roger Moors, Ledingham McAllister
 Staff: Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, introduced a proposal for the corner of East 39th Avenue and Fraser Street. He noted that there has been very little redevelopment on the street for several blocks. The site slopes from Fraser Street to the lane as well as from East 39th Avenue to the lane. The proposal is ground floor commercial with three levels of residential above. There are two levels of underground parking and because of the slope on the site the applicant has provided two entrances to the parking. The lower entrance will be residential only and the upper one will be for both commercial and residential. The residential entry for the units is on East 39th Avenue. There will be a total of 51 dwelling units including 23 studios and 24 one-bedroom units. Mr. Adair described the architectural expression and materials palette and he noted that it will be a rental building.

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

- The quality of exterior materials on both Fraser Street and East 39th Avenue;
- The corner expression;
- The treatment of rear elevation in terms of the amount of openings and landscaping.

Mr. Adair took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Keith Hemphill, Architect, further described the proposal noting the streetwall massing with the standard setbacks for C-2 zoning to the fourth floor which provides substantial open space. The units at the back have a higher floor to ceiling height as of result of the slope in the site. Mr. Hemphill noted that the materials are of a good quality and they will be using a brick veneer and architectural concrete. They are planning on as much landscaping as possible and because of the setbacks they are able to have continuous landscaping from the lane around to East 39th Avenue. There will be planters on the terraces and as well they are planning on having landscape grow down the concrete walls in the lane. Mr. Hemphill described the rationale for the location of the loading bay noting that trucks will be able to access the area easier than if the loading bay was mid block. Mr. Hemphill stated that the building is to be a high rental building with the same quality as any condominium building in the area.

Jonathan Losee, Landscape Architect, described the planting material for the proposal.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider simplifying the material selection;
 - Consider a stronger expression on the suites at the lane on the second floor.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought the project would be an excellent addition to the neighbourhood.

The Panel thought the proposal fitted well within the C-2 Bylaw and related well to the site. They also thought the design for the studio and one-bedroom suites were well done and they liked that there was a different responses on the front and the back of the building. Several Panel members thought the architectural expression could be simpler especially on the corner and felt that the corner didn't need to be celebrated. The Panel welcomed the robust treatment on the lane although one Panel member noted that the landscaping looked a little timid to mitigate the mass of the concrete wall.

Regarding the store front, a couple of Panel members noted that it read like separate store fronts and the articulation will need to be changed if it becomes a single tenant. One Panel member also noted that there needed to be room for signage. Another Panel member thought it was a lost opportunity to not have roof top access.

Several Panel members were concerned with the volume of the suites on the lane side and felt they looked like another half storey had been created. They felt the expression could be stronger if there was a way to link the fenestration with the whole height as the banding wasn't working.

They noted that the overall architectural expression will come down to the issue of material and colour choices. Several Panel members thought the colour palette of beige and brown tones was not appropriate and wanted a more abstract palette. One Panel member suggested the colours could better mediate the small scale of the residential and that the colours could be either more subtle or more vibrant as the brown would be depressing on rainy winter days.

The Panel supported the landscaping plans with a couple of Panel members being concerned with the viability of the plants in the lane and noted that they will need to be irrigated. They were also concerned with the proposed plants in the small planters noting that in rental buildings where the population is expected to be transient, they might not be taken care of over time.

Regarding sustainability, the Panel thought the applicant could go further with energy savings with one Panel member suggesting the applicant consider roof top solar hot water and making the roof ready for that possibility in the future. The applicant was commended for a well executed bike parking area.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hemphill thanked the Panel for their constructive comments. He said they would be happy to address the roof top access. He noted that earlier in the C-2 zoning it was a requirement to have roof top access. He hoped the City would encourage that as it would be a big benefit for the residents. Regarding the planting on the lane, he noted that the planters were raised with a curb so it will be protected some

what from vehicles traffic. Mr. Hemphill added that they have contracted with a maintenance company to look after the landscaping on the decks.

2. Address:	1240 Howe Street
DE:	413376
Description:	STIR project; To construct a 7-storey mixed use residential/office building.
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete
Review:	First
Owner:	Brenhill Developments LTD.
Architect:	GBL Architects
Delegation:	Stu Lyon, GBL Architects Konrad Babicz, Senga Landscape Architects Brent Kerr, Brenhill Developments Ltd.
Staff:	Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for 19 units of dedicated rental housing. Mr. Black described the context for the area and noted that the building meets the set-backs that are required in Downtown-South regulations, although the guidelines recommended the portion above 70 feet in height be set back further from the side. He noted the discrepancy between the floor plans that suggested the back face of the adjacent building was flush with the back face of the proposal and that the model shows the correct alignment. The exterior expression has a graphic feature on the side which will be done in metal cladding. The smaller intervals in the wall will be glass rated panels that will add some illumination to the façade at night and the building will have an overall silvery expression. Mr. Black noted that there is going to be an interface challenge between the existing building next door with the open balconies down the front.

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

- How the liveability of the units could be reasonably handled.
- The urban form that is proposed in its context.

Mr. Black took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Stu Lyon, Architect, further described the proposal noting that it was a challenge working with a 25 foot site. The main challenge was parking and so the STIR program helped the project. The STIR program relaxed the parking requirements. There are two parking stalls directly off the lane. He noted the building is within the general guidelines for height and will include 19 units in seven storeys. There will be one unit on the front and two units on the lane side. There will also be one small office space which will give one bigger unit in the back on the ground floor. Mr. Lyon described the architectural expression for the proposal. He noted the sidewall with the fire glass inserts and the randomized pattern that will also be expressed on the roof.

Konrad Babicz, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans noting that in the front the streetscape is governed by City requirements. There are two existing trees at the front and they are planning an additional tree between them. For the entry he noted that they are proposing black square cut stone and English yew hedging. For the back patio they will be using a combination of materials including a square cut stone and custom made planters. The extensive roof is an important element for storm water management.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - The Panel had no substantial concerns with this proposal.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and commended the applicant team for an outstanding little project.

The Panel acknowledged the challenge of working with a 25 foot wide site but thought this type of development should be seen more in the city as it was well handled. One Panel member noted that what was missing in the city was whimsy and this building would be a nice addition. They also agreed that the STIR project had made it possible to build on smaller sites and made for an interesting building.

They agreed that it was a simple, elegant form and having any setback would destroy the simplicity and elegance of the building. They thought the material palette was modest and at the same time there was a confidence in the design. The Panel acknowledged the interface to the adjacent site was a challenge given the form of the building but thought it was well handled. One Panel member suggested the building height should not relate to the parapet of the adjacent building and thought the building would be stronger if there was another storey. Another member felt on grade portion needed work to carry the exuberance of expression down to grade.

The Panel liked the fire glass inserts and thought the glazing would be interesting within the units and on the exterior at night. The Panel supported the reduction in the parking spaces.

The Panel supported the landscape plans but thought it would be desirable to have a social amenity on the green roof since the residents were in smaller units. A couple of Panel members suggested not adding a third tree as it would interfere with the rhythm on the street. One Panel member asked the applicant to reconsider the balcony materials to reduce water dripping to the balcony below. Another member felt that detailing of the balcony connections could make or break the expression.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Lyon said he was looking forward to getting inside the building and mapping out some of the basic suites and making the interiors flow.

Mr. Kerr thanked Mr. Lyon and his team. He noted that the name of the building (Silver) was a play on words for a sliver of a site. He added that there are fabulous buildings in Europe that are only 20 feet wide and wondered why they couldn't be built in Vancouver.

3. Address:	1401 Comox Street
DE:	4133347
Description:	T construct a new rental residential development consisting of a 22-storey tower and a 2-storey building.
Zoning:	RM-5 to CD-1
Application Status:	RZ/Complete
Review:	First
Owner:	Westbank Projects
Architect:	Henriquez Partners Architects
Delegation:	Gregory Henriquez, Henriquez Partners Architects Jennifer Stamp, Durante Kreuk Landscape Architects Ian Gillespie, Westbank Projects Frank Stebner, HPA
Staff:	Karen Hoese/Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-1)

- Introduction:** Karen Hoese, Rezoning Planner, noted that the proposal was a concurrent rezoning and complete application for the site of the former St. John's Church. The proposal is part of the new STIR program that was approved by Council in June 2009. The program provides a strategic set of incentives to encourage and facilitate development of new market housing with the intent of making the projects economically viable. The incentives include reducing parking, waived DCL's, rental property assessment and where a rezoning is involved, concurrent processing and bonus density. The applicant is asking to rezone the site from RM-5 to CD-1 to allow an increase in the density and height beyond what is permitted under the current zoning. The proposal is for a 22-storey residential tower and a freestanding townhouse component. An amenity room on the roof level of the tower is planned as well as 2 levels of underground parking. There will be 193 rental units ranging in size from 400 square feet (studio) to 1050 square feet (3 bedroom townhouse). The rental units are guaranteed for the life of the building. As required for all rezoning, a minimum of LEED™ Silver equivalent is proposed.

Ralph Segal, Senior Architect/Development Planner, further introduced the project noting the zoning parameters. Under the RM-5 guidelines the site qualifies for a tower of up to 190 feet in height provided there are no other tall buildings on the same half block within 400 feet. There also needs to be a minimum of 80 feet in separation to any other higher building. The siting of the tower minimizes the neighbouring impacts although there will be a shadow impact across private property. The applicant has attempted to create a lower density massing adjacent to the neighbour in order to reduce the impacts.

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

- Has the proposed form of development (tower massing, tower form and height, etc.) appropriately incorporated the increased density?
- Does the lower level treatment contribute to the Comox and Broughton streetscapes?
- Is an appropriate level of livability been achieved?
- Does the project's proposed Green Building Strategy address Sustainability?
- Overall architecture of the proposal.

Ms. Hoese and Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Gregory Henriquez, Architect, further described the proposal. He noted that rental housing hasn't been built in the West End since the 1970's and that the challenges of building rental housing are efficiencies and affordability issues. Mr. Henriquez said that they had to deal with the modernist idiom of the towers of the 70's

and yet they wanted to be more sensitive on the ground plane in terms of the building's relationship to the neighbours. They have designed 13 townhouses that will be family oriented. He described the sun shades on the western exposures and brick tiles that have been integrated into the architecture. He also noted that they have designed larger balconies to create more outdoor space for the residents. All the units will contain a storage area and an outdoor amenity has been planned with a barbeque. The public realm includes some passive park area to more active areas with a play area to welcome children back into the neighbourhood. Mr. Henriquez noted that the leaded glass panels that were in the church will be integrated into entrance of the building.

Ian Gillespie, Developer, noted that they had met with Gordon House about including a community function on the site. It would be a 3-storey building and would be donated to Gordon House.

Jennifer Stamp, Landscape Architect, described the landscape plans and noted the heritage elements on the site. The sandstone wall on the southwest corner will be rebuilt. In the lawn area there is a church cornerstone.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider a smaller floor plate and a taller tower;
 - Consider more exploration for passive design consideration;
 - Consider increasing the amount of space on the balconies.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the project and commended the team for designing rental building.

The Panel had some concerns with the process of combining a rezoning with a complete as part of the STIR program.

The Panel thought it was an appropriate form and expression for the neighbourhood but would need to be handled with careful detailing. They supported the density and tower form, however, they saw the proposal as a massive building on a small site. They were concerned with the location of the townhouses and thought there were some livability issues regarding a lack of light and overview from the neighbours. A couple of Panel members noted that the relationship didn't feel like it belonged in the West End. Most of the Panel supported the zero setback on Broughton Street with one Panel noting that if it was shifted back it would have more impact on the internal courtyard.

Several Panel members thought the extensive balconies implied a massing bulk that wasn't contributing solar heat gain mitigation because they are on the south west facade. They also thought the slab extensions created a volume the building didn't have. Several Panel members suggested paring back the slab extensions to give a slim expression on the building. They also thought the floor plate could be smaller and suggested making the tower taller. One Panel member encouraged the applicant to review the size of the units as there could be renters looking for larger units especially in this neighbourhood.

The Panel supported the landscape plans however thought there could be more open space. They thought the historical elements in the landscape plans were appropriate. A couple of Panel members suggested rotating the townhouses for a better relationship to the courtyard. Also most of the Panel supported a roof top amenity on the townhouses.

Regarding sustainability, a couple of Panel members suggested the applicant go through the modeling exercise. They were concerned with the amount of continuous glazing and thought that more solid walls were more efficient than spandrel glass. They also suggested the applicant consider the glazing and the radiator effect of the slab extensions.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Henriquez thanked the Panel for their comments and said they would work to improve the project.

4. Address:	2528 Maple Street (Pulse)
DE:	413284
Description:	Minor Amendment.
Zoning:	C-3A
Application Status:	MA
Review:	Second
Owner:	0711138 BC LTD - DBA Pulse
Architect:	Rob Feldstein Architect
Delegation:	Rob Feldstein, Rob Feldstein Architect Kim Maust, Bastion Development
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Senior Architect/Development Planner, introduced a minor amendment for the Pulse. The minor amendment relates to a few changes to the elevation. The most prominent change has to do with the deletion of what was previously approved in the original application regarding the spiral stairs on the top floor at the West Broadway, Maple Street and the lane elevations. As well as the deletion of translucent glass screens around the spiral stairs. Mr. Segal reviewed the comments from the previous UDP meeting when the proposal was given unanimous support. He noted that the minor amendment proposes that the glass surrounds not be added to the spiral stairs. The reasons for this change include maintenance issues, difficulty in constructing the glass surrounds and visibility issues from the interior of the suites.

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

- Would deletion of the approved translucent glass screens around the spiral stairs diminish the quality of the architectural design?

Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Rob Feldstein, Architect, noted the surround would be 14 feet in height and would obscure any views from inside and would also act as a blinder from the living rooms of the adjacent suites to the mountains. The other issues were that the surround would cut down the amount of light into the units below and the structure is rather awkward with struts that could be home to pigeons. The idea of having a lantern doesn't exist because the control of the lighting would be from the unit owner and the all the stair lights might not be turned on at the same time. There was also concern that the place for the barbeque in the units below is immediately below the enclosures and smoke could be drawn into the suites. Mr. Feldstein also noted that the maintenance expenses would be very costly.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the minor amendment.

The Panel felt the building would look better without the glass enclosure on the spiral stairs. They felt it was a handsome building and that the glass surrounds would take away from the architecture of the spiral staircases. Most of the Panel thought the bottom layer of spandrel glass should be put back into the design. They also thought there would be an additional benefit of adding an art piece in the plaza at the corner of West Broadway and Maple Street.

- **Applicant's Response:** Ms. Maust said she appreciate all the comments.
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5. Address:	Downtown Capacity & View Corridors Study
DE:	Non-voting Workshop
Description:	To seek input and advice as to the best options from an urban design perspective.
Zoning:	N/A
Application Status:	N/A
Review:	N/A
Owner:	N/A
Architect:	N/A
Delegation:	Kevin McNaney, Planner, City of Vancouver Cory Dobson, Planner, City of Vancouver
Staff:	Ralph Segal/Colton Krisop

EVALUATION: NON-VOTING WORKSHOP

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Architect/Development Planner, introduced the workshop on the Vancouver View's Study. He noted that the presentation was given at a Council Workshop.

Vancouver Views is a review of the Council adopted height limits and view corridors affecting the study area and the recommend changes, if appropriate, to achieve additional development capacity. The intent is to identify possible modifications while still achieving the objectives underlying the current height and view corridor policies.

Vancouver is a product of the values of our people. One of those values has to do with Vancouver as a City in Nature. The Vancouver Views Study addresses people's visual access to the mountains as one aspect of its image as a City in Nature. These views are a part of the Vancouver brand. Mr. Segal noted that the Panel was asked for their input on whether this is a critical moment, an opportunity to reinforce and advance the City's image, in respect to its built form and its relationship to its natural setting.

Mr. Segal also noted that a question being asked was whether the view corridors were now inhibiting further desirable growth in the Downtown. In the course of completing the Metro Core Study Council made substantial zoning and policy changes to solve the job space issue within the view corridor heights. Council rezoned large areas of the downtown to higher commercial densities and allowed heights to expand upwards to the view cone limits. The Metro Core analysis showed that the city can accommodate the anticipated residential growth needs in the Downtown within the existing zoning, and can add 28,000 more residents and 3 million square feet of commercial capacity by rezoning up to the existing View Corridor heights. In summary, Metro Core has revealed that there is ample capacity to accommodate commercial and residential growth targets in the Downtown.

Mr. Segal noted that in consultation with the public and advisors, they were told that creating and maintaining a livable city using great urban design comes first and that we should not sacrifice great urban design and liveability to achieve public benefits. He noted that we can provide additional public benefits and retain what makes us special. Staff are proposing a way to do both by striking a balance.

Mr. Segal showed a photo taken from 1988 from the South False Creek seawall, towards the Lions. The area (the former EXPO 86 site) was about to be redeveloped by Concord and this spurred the introduction of view corridors because it was foreseen that without a clear guideline in place these views would be lost all together. He then showed another photo that was taken in 2009 which clearly illustrated that the view protection guidelines had worked but also showed how much view had been lost to development. Clearly without the

intervention of view protection guidelines, the entire view of the mountains would have been lost.

Staff consulted with four local and international advisors. These advisors were Norm Hotson, Joe Hruda, Ken Greenberg (Urban Designer from Toronto) and Kiros Shen (Director of Planning for Boston). Their key message was to reinforce the image of the City and its place in the natural setting by strengthening the presence of the mountains. At the same time there is an opportunity to also enhance the city skyline and give greater coherency to its built form by allowing a limited number of taller buildings on a limited number of sites. Mr. Segal noted that in order to achieve this, there is a need for architectural excellence in prominent locations.

Computer 3-d modeling led staff to conclude that there could be a more dynamic relationship between the city built skyline and the mountain ridgeline, and that there were options for a more sculptural approach to shaping the skyline and preserving mountain views, noting that simply building out to the present plimsol line would ultimately generate a very boring flat top skyline.

After considering all the public feedback and the advice of the advisor group, staff have settled on 4 concepts to put forward for the Panel's feedback prior to developing policy directions for Council consideration.

The Four Concepts:

1. View Strengthening (results in minor increase to capacity)
2. Expanding the Policy for Higher Buildings (area could result in +1 million square feet)
3. Varied Building Line (may net out or increase)
4. New Views (need not diminish capacity)

View strengthening seeks small adjustments to a limited number of the views to improve performance. Another concept being evaluated is the expansion of the policy for higher buildings to accentuate the skyline and enhance the sense of arrival and ceremonial importance of Georgia and Burrard Streets.

The proposed tall building sites crest in the centre and terrace down towards the water to support the desired "dome shape" as outlined in the Skyline Study of 1998.

Mr. Segal noted that one key question will be how to strengthen and enhance the extremely important relationship between the city skyline and the setting. The solid lines and firm borders of the view corridors have served well over the last 20 years but it's time for a new, more sculptural approach. As the city is built up to the existing view corridor height limits there is a strong possibility that the eastern portion of the downtown will develop a "flat top". A more thoughtful and creative shaping of the skyline to strengthen the relationship between the city and mountains is needed.

One concept is to move from flat building or plimsol lines to more dynamic ones where there is a bit of give and take. Additional development would be allowed above the plimsol line in exchange for additional view areas below the present plimsol line, with the objective of enhancing the perception of depth in the skyline. There are a number of challenges in implementing this type of approach, including physical implementation and the notion of equity.

Finally the last new concept is to address the next leap in city building by discovering and celebrating new views especially in areas of new growth. As the city continues to build important new public places such as the Olympic Plaza in Southeast False Creek, there is a

need to explore new protected views that affirm the relationship of these places to this mountainous setting.

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

Do the proposed 4 Concepts for Vancouver Views contribute to improving Vancouver's urban design:

1. View Strengthening
2. Expanding the Policy for Higher Buildings
3. Varied Building Line
4. New Views

Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Related Commentary:**

- Street views: amazing that this still exists and needs to be included in the documents;
- The views along the Broadway corridor should be included in the document;
- Going to have to allow some development to happen and then gage the public's opinions;
- Most of the view cones are about places where people view the mountains from the sea wall and from their cars on the bridges;
- Important to anticipate the conversation in 50 or 100 years regarding view cones;
- Saving public memories are important as the heritage registry;
- Important to have a road map to help developers/applicants through this process. Every developer is going to want to know if they can go higher with their buildings;
- There has been a lot of grumbling over the years regarding the view cones and how they hinder development. Need to give more meaning and substance to refuel the initial idea of having view cones;
- Would be a good exercise to consider what would have happened to the city skyline if there hadn't been any view cones;
- Good timing to consider the view cones as the downtown isn't built out as yet;
- Important to consider how visitors approach the city from the south and their first experience in seeing Vancouver as it is a little underwhelming;
- The exercise offers a good balance at providing opportunities in expanding a variety of views;
- Would like to see the information translated into a three dimensional model;
- There should be a varied building line to make the city more interesting;
- All four concepts are supportable; and
- An additional piece to add to the report would be the consideration of the rapid transit systems.
- One panel member stated that the proposed 4 Concepts for Vancouver Views did not contribute to improving Vancouver's urban design, but instead addressed the city's overall urban form.

- **Staff's Response:** Kevin McNaney thanked the Panel for their comments. He said that one thing that is important to remember is that a strong view protection framework has brought certainty, clarity and ease of understanding to what Planning Staff has been doing for the last 20 years. He added that they will focus on making sure the documents are clear and to strengthen the process.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.