

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** November 18, 1998

**TIME:** N/A

**PLACE:** N/A

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Joyce Drohan (Chair)  
Sheldon Chandler  
Per Christoffersen (excused Item #1)  
Joseph Hruda  
Peter Kreuk  
Sean McEwan  
Norman Shearing (excused Item #1)  
Peter Wreglesworth (excused Item #1)

**REGRETS:**  
Patricia Campbell  
Geoff Glotman  
James Hancock  
Jim McLean

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:**  
Carol Hubbard

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### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. Workshop Discussion: 500 - 800 & 900 Canada Place Way (Trade and Convention Centre)

**1. WORKSHOP: 500 - 800 & 900 Canada Place Way**

Use: Trade and Convention Centre

Zoning: CD-1

Application Status: Rezoning

Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey & Zeidler

Owner: Greystone Properties

Review: 4th

Delegation: Mark Whitehead, Bob McKay, Alan Endall, et al

Staff: Ralph Segal, Rob Jenkins

**Introduction**

Ralph Segal, Senior Development Planner, introduced this workshop discussion. He explained that the proposal is being processed in a manner similar to a rezoning application and will be considered by Council at a public meeting on December 8, 1998. The report to Council will include the Panel's commentary and non-support of October 7. The report will also identify the design of the convention centre as a "work in progress" and note that this workshop is a component of the design evolution of the scheme.

This workshop seeks to address specific issues raised on October 7 and the Panel's commentary today will also be forwarded to assist Council in its deliberations on December 8. In summary, the areas of concern raised previously by the Panel were as follows:

- plaza definition and orientation, and the series of "disparate elements" in the plaza;
- the hotel tower and its intrusion into the Seymour view corridor;
- linkages to the city and to open spaces in the immediate surrounding area, specifically Granville Square;
- the immense size and impermeability of the hotel podium;
- treatment of the podium roof;
- the phase two tower;
- continuity of the water's edge; and
- lack of emphasis of the seabus connection.

The applicant's design team reviewed the current evolution of the project and discussed various aspects at length with Panel members. It was noted that the project will be returned for full review by the Panel after the December 8 Council meeting. Separate Development Applications for each component will also be brought to the Panel for review as the project proceeds.

Following is a summary of the Panel's comments after the general discussion and question-and-answer period:

The Panel commended the applicants for the effort that had been put into the presentation. It is evident that a number of approaches have been explored and considerable historical research undertaken, which the Panel felt is now starting to pay off in terms of bringing to the space the significance it deserves.

**The Plaza**

The Panel unanimously agreed that the orientation of the plaza, away from the side of the existing Canada Place, is a significant improvement. As well, the concept of the higher, repetitive arcade is a much stronger means of tying the plaza and its disparate building parts together. Close attention will be necessary, however, to avoid it becoming a relentless feature - careful consideration will need to be given to the integration of the arcade elements with the buildings they come up against. One example is the need to reconsider the curving glazed volumes of the new reception area at Canada Place at the west side of the plaza.

The Panel remained concerned about the lack of definition of the plaza relative to its vertical scale, particularly on the easterly and southerly edges where it was felt that far greater strength was needed. One Panel member thought the height along the easterly hotel frontage should be increased to at least 120 ft., even if it means introducing a completely new element to the scheme, extending from Canada Place Way to the waterfront. It was felt the suggestion of adding a trellis or pergola above the proposed 40 ft. would not adequately address the scale of this plaza. The Panel generally agreed that this is an area that needs much greater exploration.

It was acknowledged that the plaza design is not yet refined, however, the Panel stressed that the space cannot be a success until it has been very carefully integrated with the architecture. At the next stage of the design the Panel will look forward to seeing some "sense of place" and connectiveness to the plaza to help bring all the components together, as well as more landscape than is shown currently.

Addressing issues of pedestrian comfort in every way possible will also be an important aspect of ensuring the success of the plaza. Panel members were concerned that the plaza is a truly public space, especially during the times when the convention centre is not in use and a major generator of pedestrian activity. Every effort must be made to make the space as inviting as possible for the public at large.

#### **Linkages**

(N.B. A study of the open space network and pedestrian routes linking to this development, as previously recommended by the Panel, should be an integral part of developing this and all other connections.)

In general, the Panel found most of the linkages to be very well addressed, with the single exception of the linkage to Granville Square which remains a serious concern. It was agreed that there is certainly no ready solution. It was suggested, however, that a key to its resolution will be to make the linkage the "path of least resistance" which will go some way to ensuring the vital pedestrian circulation is preserved. It was noted that the nature of Granville Square will change from its present one of destination to being a gateway to a larger, more significant plaza on the waterfront. This will inevitably require some redesign of Granville Square. In doing so, the linkage through must be clear and obvious, with strong sight lines, to convey the pedestrian through as easily as possible. The idea of introducing as much retail as possible to the Granville Square plaza was supported.

#### **Hotel Podium**

While there has been little change in this area since the last submission, the Panel was encouraged to see some signs of a break at the porte cochere of the drop off for the hotel and the slight shifting of the tower which have helped to give the Canada Place Way edge a little more interest. Ensuring there is a break through to the Cambie Street connection as a totally public link to the water's edge will be a critical part of the whole scheme, including the future phase two development.

The treatment of the podium roof was seen as successful and very attractive. Indeed, some Panel members commented that they found this space more appealing than the plaza below. There was strong encouragement to provide for more uses at this level, not only those associated with the hotel, such as jogging trails, courts, etc., but as a means of attracting the general public. It was acknowledged that this will be a challenge given the restrictions of the hotel, but more than warranted in this particular location.

The Panel expressed concern about the proposed pedestrian ramp running across the north façade of the hotel podium and the way it meets the northwest corner of the podium. While it offers very

good views and pedestrian interest on the water side, the 150 ft. walkway on the building side is quite uncomfortable, visually unappealing and creates public safety and security concerns. It needs to be dealt with much more sensitively.

The podium massing and perimeter treatment remain the weakest part of the scheme. Careful consideration should be given to mitigating the mass on the site and ensuring that uses at the perimeter of the lower floors are selected for their potential to animate and enhance the adjacent outdoor spaces.

#### **Seabus**

The Panel found the Seabus connection much improved and felt there was some real potential to celebrate this unique Vancouver transit mode. Panel members liked the many opportunities for entering into the system along the way. There were suggestions to strengthen the visual references and to include a more vertical element at the terminal itself. As well, it was felt that much more generous gestures could be made towards an interchange with the bus to the seabus at this location, especially given the long distance from the old CP station. There is potential, for example, to create a larger scale bus shelter on Canada Place Way for the comfort of commuters. It would also help to integrate everyday public activity into the place which will ultimately contribute to its overall success.

#### **Continuity of the Water's Edge**

The extension of the prefunction area was seen as a positive and appealing gesture. The sense of arrival is more attractive than before, and the floating pier concept will encourage smaller vessels that will contribute to the animation. There were several suggestions encouraging circulation from the Seabus to the northwest corner of the plaza, leading to Howe Street. It was also recommended to include some weather protection in this location. A critical point which needs some careful study is the juncture between the east-west walkway and the vertical connection for the plaza.

#### **Porte Cochere**

The weather protection at the porte cochere was supported, with one suggestion to extend it somewhat. Given the dramatic vista in this location the very light structure illustrated will be very important.

There were a number of comments about the existing porte cochere of Canada Place, noting that this area is still quite problematic. It was suggested there is potential for bringing some light down into this area and the possibility of extending it part way across the Howe Street pedestrian way, giving the drop-off some presence under the glazed porte cochere. This might also allow a narrowing of the driveways under the building.

#### **Seymour Street View Corridor**

Only one Panel member commented on the obstruction into the Seymour Street view corridor, noting that moving it was a good gesture but questioning whether there was room to move it further. An illustration of the view from Pender Street would have been helpful.

#### **Covered Walkway**

The Panel had no concerns with the bridging glass elements across the entry plaza at the foot of Howe Street., provided the structure remains as light as depicted in the illustrative material.

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In general the Panel felt some positive steps had been taken to make this development meet its potential as a premier public space in the city. The Panel appreciated the team's efforts in the short space of time since the last review and noted that further effort will be required to reinforce all the gestures that have been made so far. While the hotel podium remains a serious concern, the Panel was encouraged by the direction the development is taking in a number of significant areas.