
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: November 27, 2002

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Helen Besharat
Jeffrey Corbett (excused Item #3)
Gerry Eckford
Reena Lazar
Stuart Lyon (excused Item #4)
Kim Perry
Maurice Pez
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss

REGRETS: Richard Henry
Joseph Hruda

RECORDING SECRETARY: Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 687 Howe Street (801 Georgia Street)
2. 1530 West 8th Avenue
3. 150 Water Street & 151 Cordova Street
4. Southeast False Creek (1st & 2nd Avenue Private Lands)

Business

Very High Buildings:

Noting that a number of proposals are anticipated early next year that will be seeking exceptional height, the Planning Department sought the Panel's response to the prospect of inviting one or two internationally acknowledged architects with credentials in designing very tall towers. The intent would be for these architects to provide additional input to the Panel's advice.

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, advised a Workshop on higher buildings has been tentatively scheduled for the January 29, 2003 Panel meeting. The high building policy approved by Council identifies six sites in the downtown that could potentially accommodate higher buildings (500 - 600 ft.), the critical factor being the shaping of the city's skyline.

The following comments were made in the general discussion that followed:

- there are local architects with experience in the design of very tall towers who might be included because they are more aware of contextual issues;
- some architects' criticism would be based more on the design of the building than the planning objectives of the city overall;
- a planner-architect might be a better choice of participant than a "signature" architect;
- it would be more valuable for the input to be at the workshop rather than in the review of a specific proposal, to provide the Panel with a better understanding of the issues;
- care should be taken in treating proponents differently than everyone else with the introduction of additional outside input;
- it may be more appropriate for the outside architect to give some background to the general idea of tall buildings and for the Panel to deal with the specific local issues;
- it would be exciting and educational to have a prominent architect participate with the Panel;
- most design professionals in the city consider the Panel to be part of the process and bringing in someone of stature can only assist in achieving a better building;
- the Panel would like to be involved in selecting the participants;
- copies of the Report to Council and the Skyline Study should be distributed to the Panel;
- if possible, the invited architect might also offer a public seminar (the Planning Commission might be able to facilitate);
- ground plane implications of very high buildings need to be included in the discussions.

1. Address:	687 Howe Street (801 Georgia Street)
DA:	407114
Use:	Hotel/Residential
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Bing Thom
Owner:	Allied Holdings Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Bing Thom, Jim Mouzourakis, Chris Phillips, Chris Doray
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-2)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, introduced this application, noting it was preceded by a rezoning which increased height and density on this Hotel Georgia parkade site. The application proposes hotel lobby and vehicular access on the ground floor, six levels of “robotic parking”, 14 floors of hotel facilities including a sky lobby, and 26 floors of residential. The zoning now permits up to 465ft. habitable height, 506.6 ft. absolute height, to comply with the view corridor affecting this site. The massing is very similar to that proposed at the rezoning stage and which was unanimously supported by the Panel. The Panel’s concerns at that time related to the treatment of Howe Street grade level, and treatment of the above-grade parking and its relationship to the adjacent heritage façade of the Hotel Georgia. With respect to the façade treatment of the tower, the nature and performance of the proposed glass is an important consideration and the Panel’s advice is sought on this aspect of the proposal.
- **Applicant’s Opening Comments:** Bing Thom, Architect, described the design rationale and Chris Phillips briefly reviewed the landscape plan. Referring to samples, Chris Doray, Architect, described the glass in greater detail and the design team responded to the Panel’s questions.
- **Panel’s Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application.

The Panel found it to be a very beautiful, sculptural building, although several Panel members questioned whether this was the best location for it. One comment was that it would be more successful on a different site which has less imposing building elements around it. A comment was also made that it would have been helpful to have an understanding of what the Planning Department considers to be the locations that are worthy of very high buildings and how they would fit in the skyline.

The Panel stressed that the success of this building will be in the details. The applicant’s intent to do some full-scale modelling to ensure that it works was strongly encouraged. A comment was made that the proposal requires a great deal of faith that the details can be successfully pulled off by the design team. One Panel member noted the potentially high costs involved in refinement of the details and recommended exploring something a little less aesthetically simple (perhaps a different window system) to ensure viability from a business and marketing point of view as well as architecturally.

The applicant was complimented on the amount of research that has gone into the glass. While the desire to maintain the purity of the glass expression was appreciated, several Panel members thought it could still be maintained with the inclusion of weather protection, perhaps in the form of a suspended

glass canopy at the street level. An observation was also made that there are pieces of this building that project and will present soffits (which may not be glass) that will be viewed from below.

With respect to the relationship to the Hotel Georgia there were concerns expressed that the extent of fritted glass appears to mimic the height of the Hotel Georgia. It was recommended that the fritted glass be extended, accentuating the height and elegance of the new building while still reflecting the rhythm of the old. Although it may not be recognized from the street this will be particularly important when viewed from a distance.

The Panel had concerns about the entry experience and whether it can successfully accommodate all the activities associated with a hotel lobby. The Panel generally found the expression at street level to be rather sterile and uninviting. It was felt that a lot more work needs to be done to make this whole area more attractive for visitors to come in and take the elevator up to the sky lobby and for people to be able to move in and out of the building as clearly and safely as possible. There was also a suggestion that the parking entrance could be more prominent, more in keeping with the size of this building.

A comment was made that the floor plans of the residential units fail to live up to the excitement and uniqueness of the building's architecture.

One Panel member had some concern about the style of the model being more market driven than reality, which can be misleading. For example, the building will be much more opaque than shown on the model because there will be blinds and curtains inside the windows.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Thom noted there have been many different proposals for this site over the last twenty years. They would prefer to see the tower moved forward but a major restriction has been that the Heritage Commission would not permit a major intervention with the Hotel Georgia. Mr. Thom noted that at the rezoning stage the Panel encouraged him to seek even greater height to free up some of the density at the ground level. He agreed the Panel's comments about the ground plane are very valid. With respect to the comment about the model, Mr. Thom said he believes models are pieces of art which have to represent the artistic endeavour. Models can never truly represent the building in terms of materials and colours. He said their model is intended to convey the artistic intent, not to deceive.

Jim Mouzourakis, Developer, thanked the Panel for its input. He said they take very seriously the comments made about the ground plane which they will endeavour to improve.

-
2. Address: 1530 West 8th Avenue
 DA: 407049
 Use: Mixed (11storeys)
 Zoning: C-3A
 Application Status: Complete
 Architect: Nigel Baldwin
 Owner: Intracorp
 Review: First
 Delegation: Nigel Baldwin, Tom Miller, Chuck Brook, Bruce Hemstock
 Staff: Mary Beth Rondeau
-

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)

- **Introduction:** Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application. The site is half a block from the Broadway/Granville intersection. It has a frontage of 215 ft. and slopes about 11 ft. from the U-shaped lane to the street. Ms. Rondeau described the surrounding context, stressing there is considerable view sensitivity on this project, specifically from the neighbouring Triton and Manhattan residential towers.

The application is for an all residential project: townhouses on West 8th Avenue with a 12 ft. setback, and townhouses continuing partially around the westerly lane. A large semi private open space separates the townhouses from the tower which contains the remainder of the residential. 1.0 FSR and 30 ft. height are permitted outright in the C-3A zone. This may be increased to a maximum of 3.0 FSR and height beyond 30 ft. The application seeks 3.0 FSR and the height exceeds the guideline recommended maximum height of 100 ft., in places to 104 ft. and 105 ft. The Panel's advice is sought on how this development earns the additional height and density being requested. Ms. Rondeau reviewed the criteria on which the Development Permit Board may consider relaxations. The Burrard Slopes Guidelines which apply to this site were also briefly reviewed. The Panel's comments are sought on the pedestrian realm, particularly the detailed treatment of the 6 ft. setback, including the developer's proposal for an additional artistic endeavour in this setback. Significant trees are proposed for each corner of the project. Materials are brick, concrete and glass.

The Panel's comments are sought on the proposed massing which differs from the guidelines which suggest a strong base for the full width of the site and shoulder massing up to 70 ft. which can be 60 percent of the width of the site but proposes only 44 percent width. The upper massing of the proposal is about 3 ft. wider and 3 ft. deeper than called for in the guidelines. The floor area is also about 500 sq.ft. larger than suggested in the guidelines. With respect to the 104 ft. height at the front of the tower, view and shadow studies indicate the height requested has minimal additional impact. Ms. Rondeau reviewed the posted view diagrams.

In summary, staff seek the Panel's comments on whether the project has earned the requested density and height as well as response to the tower massing noting the view sensitivity in the area. Planning will likely seek some changes in the upper massing to meet the guidelines and to be more sensitive to the existing views of the neighbours.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Nigel Baldwin, Architect, noted the Burrard Slopes Guidelines indicate that most if not all centre block sites in the area will be able to achieve 100 ft., and that there will be a certain amount of fragmentation of views. He said their goal was to do as good a job as
-

possible to meet the intent of the guidelines in terms of the tower form and base forms and respect neighbouring views. For this reason their strategy was to move the tower as far east as possible. The larger townhouses not only allow a good setback and “eyes on the street” but keep much of the density in the lower portions rather than in the “shoulder” up to 70 ft. Turning the townhouses onto the lane is a very strong urban design feature. With respect to the height, Mr. Baldwin acknowledged they are technically over 100 ft. at the front because of the sloping site but any overage at the back should meet appurtenance requirements. He expressed surprised that they exceed the recommended floor area and said any reduction would be very damaging to the project. In summary, Mr. Baldwin said they are doing a guideline scheme and improving on it. The project has a good townhouse base with substantial materials and street interest. Bruce Hemstock, Landscape Architect, reviewed the landscape plan and the design team responded to the Panel’s questions.

- **Panel’s Comments:** The Panel unanimously supported this application and generally supported the height and density, including the minor over-width. Most Panel members considered the requested height and density to be well earned.

The Panel found the project very handsome and particularly liked the townhouse component wrapping around the lane. Several Panel members commented that the applicant clearly understood the intent of the guidelines and has improved upon them. It was felt that the small encroachments outside the guideline massing are fully acceptable and the result is an improvement over a guideline scheme. Putting density into the townhouse base rather than a shoulder on the tower was strongly supported. The Panel saw no problem with relationships to neighbouring building. One Panel member commented that a large contribution of this project is the visual garden it provides for the neighbours as well as enhancement of the lanes for the whole neighbourhood.

The Panel found the connection between the townhouses and the tower to be very successful. The way the L-shape of the townhouses completes the edge and frames the park was thought to be a nice gesture to the park.

With respect to the townhouses, a comment was made that townhouses are encouraged to provide animation on the street; however, the ground floor space is not very usable. It was suggested these spaces could be much wider with some real living space on the street that provide a connection between the residents and passersby. There was support for having the paved area outside the townhouse units big enough to accommodate a table and chairs.

The courtyard was strongly supported, as was the setback from West 8th Avenue with the double row of trees. There were some comments that the two large trees look somewhat cramped on the corners of the lane and suggestions that they might be better closer to the courtyard where they can be better enjoyed by the residents. The necessity for tree grates was questioned in this location. One Panel member also questioned the amount of common open space in the courtyard, suggesting more emphasis might be given to private patios for the benefit of the residents.

The Panel appreciated the developer’s commitment to provide some public art on this project.

The floor plans were thought to be very livable.

- **Applicant’s Response:** Mr. Baldwin thanked the Panel for its comments. With respect to the open space for the residents, Tom Miller, Intracorp, noted there is a considerable amount of private open

space in the project. He agreed the area in the front could be used for more private open space but it is likely residents would prefer to use the other spaces.

3. Address:	150 Water Street & 151 Cordova Street
DA:	407152 & 407151
Use:	Parkade
Zoning:	HA-2
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Henriquez & Partners
Owner:	City of Vancouver
Review:	First
Delegation:	Gregory Henriquez, Chris Phillips, Gret Sutherland
Staff:	Scot Hein

150 WATER STREET

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

151 CORDOVA STREET

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-2)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, introduced these applications noting they are being presented simultaneously but requesting the Panel to vote on them separately. The proposal is to replace the outdated and inefficient Cordova parkade and provide an addition to the Water Street component, including additional programmed area to bring the facade out to the front property line to establish a continuous streetwall. The proposal also adds two additional floors to maximize parking under the height of 75 ft. allowable under the new Gastown Management Plan. The basement and ground floor of both buildings will accommodate WHEX, a large tourism and educational oriented tenancy focussing on West Coast heritage. The program also provides 500 parking spaces for Woodward's as well as bridge access to Woodward's.

Following a brief review of the neighbouring context and site characteristics, the Development Planner noted the following areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought.

- overall design approach to facade treatment;
- overall approach to landscape systems;

150 Water Street:

- design approach to storefront and the single, continuous weather protection system noting the length of frontage;
- design approach taken to mark the primary WHEX entry (connecting passageway link between the two buildings);
- architectural treatment of the exit stair (fire escape expression) noting its prominence on Water Street and its role in the hierarchy of facade forms proposed;
- facade treatment for portion of the parkade south of the brick elevator;

151 Cordova Street:

- design approach to storefront and the single, continuous weather protection system noting the length of frontage;
- design approach taken to mark the secondary WHEX entry (connecting passageway link between the two buildings);
- rooftop treatment for views down to the uppermost parking plate from Woodward's residential units.

Mr. Hein advised staff have no significant concerns and he noted the support of Heritage staff and the Gastown Planning Committee.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Gregory Henriquez, Architect, briefly described the design intent noting that this is the first project under the new design guidelines for Gastown. Chris Phillips, Landscape Architect, reviewed the landscape plan. It was noted it will be a "green" building, including recycling the concrete from the demolished Cordova parkade. LEED certification will not be sought but the project will be the equivalent of LEED silver. The design team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this proposal and commended the applicant team for the considerable effort that has gone into making it all work. Most Panel members thought it would be a great addition to Gastown and a catalyst to rejuvenating the area. The sawtooth approach, especially on Water Street, was considered an appropriate response.

The sustainability aspects of the project were strongly applauded, however, one Panel member cautioned that much more work needs to be done to achieve LEED silver equivalency. It was felt the use of natural light needed to be further explored, and concern was expressed about the opaqueness of the granite limiting the penetration of natural light into the different parking levels. Some Panel members questioned whether the granite is necessary from a sustainability point of view.

The clip-on signage was supported. One Panel member thought it was more successful on the Cordova Street side because it adds to the animation of the composition of that facade, and thought it might be better to turn it on the Water Street side to give more impact.

The Panel endorsed the exit stair alluding to the historical fire escape stairs.

The Panel supported the single canopy approach and thought it could work on both façades. One Panel member thought it might be possible to relate the detailing to what is happening behind on some modules.

With respect to the Cordova Street façade, a comment was made that it might be more abstract and fragmented in its presentation and less literal in recalling an historical façade. A question was also raised about whether a modern approach had been considered, including the use of glass and other materials, noting the successful juxtaposition of modern and historical buildings in other cities.

One Panel member suggested it might be possible to introduce some live-work studios on Cordova Street. As well, to consider altering the ratio of parking spaces to provide more small car spaces, in keeping with the sustainable approach, possibly also freeing up some space for more offices on Cordova Street.

With respect to the Cordova Street façade stairs it was suggested they need not extend the two full flights above the elevator machine room as shown because it could be an annoyance for people overlooking from the Woodward's building.

The Panel endorsed the built-in flexibility of uses and suggested there could be potential for residential use at some time in the future.

Given the large size of the parkade, one Panel member commented that the parking signage could be more prominent.

A suggestion was made by one Panel member that this project should introduce some public art.

The addition of commercial space at the top of the Water Street parkade was applauded. A suggestion was made to add a stair to the rooftop to provide access to views.

The Panel had concerns about the extent of the landscaping, particularly the row of trees across the top which seems to be an anomaly given the richness of Water Street is at ground level. There was a recommendation to add a rooftop terrace to soften the overlook from Woodward's. Most Panel members supported the ivy although not all Panel members were fully convinced it would work. There was a recommendation to do more research and experiment with full scale panels before finalizing the choice. A comment was made that the ivy will be more successful on the lane side of the Water Street façade, and a caution about the need to be rigorous in keeping it under control on the Cordova and Cordova lane façades.

- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to the suggestion that the Cordova Street facade should be opened up more to allow more light penetration, Mr. Henriquez noted that one of the Gastown historical guidelines talks about a solid/void ratio of 50 percent and the proposal is already beyond GHPAC's preference in this respect. He said he believes that more modern buildings can fit into this context but the guidelines do not allow the design to be any more modern than is already proposed. He noted they are trying to strike a balance between the theatrical nature of Water Street and dealing with the historical issues.

4. Address:	South East False Creek (1st & 2nd Avenue Private Lands)
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	WORKSHOP
Architect:	Civitas - Architectura
Owner:	City of Vancouver
Review:	First
Delegation:	Joyce Drohan, Greg Chamberlain
Staff:	Scot Hein, Ian Smith

The Chair noted the receipt of letters from developers (Polygon, Bastion and Marpole Investments) which express concern that the density is being presented at 3.5 FSR rather than 4.0 FSR. These letters are attached to the minutes for the record.

Scot Hein, Development Planner, introduced this workshop on the future development of Southeast False Creek, this discussion focussing on the 1st and 2nd Avenue private lands from Main to Cambie Streets. He stressed it is very much a work in progress and staff have not yet commenced writing design guidelines. There will also be further workshops with Council. The context model also conveys some current thinking about the City-owned lands on the southeast shore of False Creek. Copies of a draft outline for design guidelines were distributed to the Panel (attached). This forms the current thinking behind the guidelines that will start to be drafted in the next few weeks. The current Planning Department position contemplates 3.5 FSR and 150 ft. height, as presented in the model. Mr. Hein noted there has been a fair amount of disagreement on what the appropriate density and height should be in the context of the City lands themselves. As well, what exclusions or bonussing might be available. At this time, 3.5 FSR will be considered as a baseline with perhaps the possibility of future bonussing.

Following a brief description of the current zoning in the area, Mr. Hein noted the City of Vancouver lands are expected to contribute a 26.4 acre park (including a school site of about 1.5 acres). 17 percent of the overall floor area will be allocated to non-market housing, two thirds of which will be suitable for families with children. 35 percent of total units will be for family oriented housing. There will also be community related facilities, daycares, public art, as well as some specific public realm improvements. The intent is for an integrated, whole and balanced community so the development of the City-owned lands will evolve simultaneously with the privately owned lands. A single ODP is anticipated, likely with the private lands phased in first.

Ian Smith, Sr. Central Area Planner, provided some further background and Joyce Drohan reviewed the four cornerstones identified in the Draft Outline.

Following are some of the Panel's comments/questions in the general discussion that ensued:

- given the current demand for residential this could end up a completely residential precinct;
- the flatness of the site is an advantage;
- a lot of detailed work up-front needs to be done on the massing and density allocation to make sure that building types referenced in the materials work;

- if the market ends up discounting the FSR due to building type it will hurt the pace of development and the sustainability potential;
- the model implies a diversity in both building forms and uses but there is a danger that all the commercial activity will concentrate along 2nd Avenue. This will become a buffer for the rest of the development which will be purely residential, with none of the diversity implied;
- concern that even though the diversity is desirable, the marketplace and not the zoning will determine its viability;
- will there be sustainability bonussing?
- developers may not go to LEED silver or higher without any bonussing;
- are 1st and 2nd Avenues too busy to develop in the way that the Arbutus lands developed?
- if the City lane did not exist, is this where the courtyard/lane would be located?
- wonder if there is an opportunity to eliminate the lane and still provide access for parking at the end;
- the centre of the lane could be a pedestrian-only mews;
- is there an area in Vancouver where this kind of flexibility of use works?
- there is an advantage in most of the service activity occurring on the shady side;
- it is difficult to allow total flexibility and yet have some control over diversity;
- live/work is a great option for providing flexibility;
- caution re mid-block connectors: the mid-block connectors in Arbutus Walk have been secured by the respective stratas. As long as there are a lot of good pedestrian connections the mid-block connections may not be necessary - they can also take flow patterns away from commercial;
- concern about the tower-townhouse forms being modelled - what is missing is the 6-7-storey mass that strongly defines the edge;
- concern that the tramway not continue too far over onto the north side of the street;
- will there be some unifying elements, e.g, public realm materials?
- an important area to look at is public-private open space: people in these communities really value their private open space and our guidelines tend to restrict it; there is an opportunity here to provide people with good, usable outdoor spaces and take care in how the semi-private and the public spaces interface with the buildings; it may be better to give more to the residents.

Q:\Clerical\UDP\MINUTES\2002\nov27.wpd