

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** October 12, 2005

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

**PLACE:** Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Alan Endall, Chair  
Larry Adams  
Robert Barnes  
Shahla Bozorgzadeh  
James Cheng  
Ronald Lea  
Margot Long  
C.C. Yao  
Peter Wregglesworth

**REGRETS:** Nigel Baldwin  
Marta Farevaag

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** D. Kempton

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| ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING |                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1.                             | 2008 Bayswater Street |
| 2.                             | East Fraser Lands     |

**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Endall called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

1. Address: 2008 Bayswater Street  
DE: 409471  
Use: Mixed (4-storeys)  
Zoning: C-2  
Application Status: Complete  
Architect: Tomas Wolfe  
Owner: Kal Bachra  
Review: Second  
Delegation: Tomas Wolfe, Kal Bachra  
Staff: Dale Morgan

**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-2)**

- **Introduction:**

Dale Morgan, Development Planner, presented this application. Mr. Morgan noted that this is a second review, with the previous proposal receiving non-support from the Panel. Mr. Morgan provided a brief history of the application stating that it involves the redevelopment of a site comprised of 3-4 character buildings which are original to the site.

Mr. Morgan noted that these buildings do not have heritage designation or status but staff are of the opinion that these buildings do have historic merit and cultural significance to the community. Investigation of heritage retention options resulted in a building that would have been 7-8 storeys in height and due to the low-rise of the neighbourhood it was felt that this was not an acceptable response. Since transfer of density was also not an option, staff concluded that there was not viable option for savings these existing buildings. The Vancouver Heritage Commission concurred with staff's conclusion.

Mr. Morgan summarized the Panel's comments from the last review and said that the model seen today is the same as at the last review without any changes. Mr. Morgan said that the biggest change from the previous application is in material; especially at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Bayswater Street. The red brick material extends from corner to corner and is brought to the base with columns. Hardy plank is proposed along the lane side and less hardy plank on the penthouse with more glazing overall. Mr. Morgan said that the blank wall on the east elevation has had brick modules interspersed with concrete block introduced.

The corner has steel and glass wrapping around the canopy to bring more significance to the corner condition. There is also steel and glass proposed at the residential entry. Mr. Morgan stated that the fenestration is more modern with bay elements of alternating open and closed balconies clad in metal panel.

In terms of landscape the boulevard on Bayswater Street will be filled in and street trees as well as street furniture have been added.

The areas in which Panel advice are sought include:

Comments on whether the applicant has satisfied the main issues identified by Panel at the previous review which are as follows:

- The building needs to focus on integrity of expression. It seems thin at this point as to whether the intent is a heritage or modern building design. The Panel is supportive of a design that does not refer to heritage;
- Design development is needed to the base plane at the street level;
- Consideration should be given to better integration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors as well as a better response to the single family dwelling across lane with materials;
- Design development to improve the east elevation;
- Consideration should be given to enrich the public realm (street treatment). Look at adding street trees, street furniture and acknowledging the existing mural;
- Development of a sustainable design strategy is recommended.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

Tomas Wolfe, Tomas Wolfe Architects, said that he took the comments from the Panel at the last meeting very seriously and looked at the façade and simplified it. Mr. Wolfe described the changes to the application stating that in comparing this design to the previous building this is more of a solid form.

The Landscape Architect described the new landscape treatments and simplified paving pattern around the perimeter of the site. The applicant answered questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

Mr. Endall noted that a letter received from Ms. Jan Pierce was distributed to the Panel for consideration.

- This project has come a long way and done a good job of satisfying the concerns of the last Panel;
- Give further attention to development of details and handling of materials;
- Strong consensus to consider deleting the hardy plank material in favor of completing the building in brick;
- Further clarity and development of details in the residential entry and also the residential exit area on the lane side.

- **Related Commentary**

The majority of Panel members felt that this proposal was an improvement from the previous proposal. There were a few detailed comments having to do with landscaping and the desire to see some richness in details added. Two Panel members stated that they felt this building is not of the neighbourhood and suggested that it be given character to identify with the neighbourhood.

Concerns were expressed with regard to the lack of sustainable initiatives proposed. In terms of livability one Panel member questioned the long hallway and seemingly unpleasant entry area while another Panel member suggested either extending the small deck over the driveway at the back or turning it into something else more useful.

- **Applicant's Response:**

Mr. Wolfe thanked the Panel for their comments and said he would consider changing the material at the back to brick. Mr. Wolfe also said that he will do more work with the residential entry and landscaping as well as introducing sustainable design elements.

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|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. Address:         | East Fraser Lands                                     |
| Use:                | Mixed                                                 |
| Zoning:             | ODP                                                   |
| Application Status: | Workshop                                              |
| Architect:          | James Cheng/Duany Plater-Zyberk                       |
| Owner:              | Parklane Homes                                        |
| Review:             | First                                                 |
| Delegation:         | Norm Shearing, Marina Khoury, James Cheng, Gino Nonni |
| Staff:              | Matt Shillito/Pat St. Michel                          |

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- **Introduction:**

Matt Shillito, Project Planner, introduced this workshop for the East Fraser Lands area. Mr. Shillito noted that the site is 126 acres of former industrial land, bordered by Marine Way to the north, the Fraser River to the south and Kerr Street to the west. The site is also bisected by a rail line which runs east/west. To the north is the residential area of Champlain Heights which was planned in the 1970's and to the east is the Burnaby industrial estate which is light industrial.

In terms of the planning process, Mr. Shillito said in 2001 when the sawmill closed the aim for this area was to create a new mixed use sustainable community. The main milestone for the project happened last December 2004 when Council adopted the policy statement for the site.

Some of the key points that came out of that policy statement were: the site should accommodate new housing for around 10,000 people at density of 1.22 FSR; the housing should be a mixture of single family, townhouses, low, mid and high rise apartments; there should be a centre to anchor the development with retail and commercial purposes and a pedestrian oriented high street; and a wide range of facilities including schools, a community centre, parks and transit.

Mr. Shillito said that the focus is now on the creation of a master plan for the site. A charrette in April generated five alternative plans for the site which have been reviewed with the public, property owner and city staff to identify the strengths and weaknesses.

Marina Khoury, applicant delegation, stated that there are a number of different strategies for treatment on different parts of the plan. The applicant team took into consideration the pedestrian schedule and identified 3 different neighbourhoods; one will be a central neighbourhood with the highest density and majority of mixed use and the other two neighbourhoods will be to the east and the west. Ms. Khoury described a series of streets with south orientation to take advantage of sunlight and a main street that curves towards the community centre.

The retail, community centre and school are the three key structures for the plan. The applicant team wanted to pull views and green into the site so they have created natural greenway corridors that divide the different neighbourhoods and connect the park. There will be a linear buffer along rail line where bike path will be and a series of elegant pedestrian mews through the site.

In terms of the general block structure and heights, Ms. Khoury said that the applicant team studied the typical Vancouver block and added a twist. It was felt that higher density should

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be on the street with lower density along the pedestrian mews. As you move east and west on the site the height feathers down and at the ecological corners there is the lowest density. Ms. Khoury explained that the applicant team wanted to keep most of the density within the largest neighbourhood and provide urban living on the main street.

With respect to landscaping there were three main directives for the open space: sustainability, hierarchy of open spaces and connectivity. The connectivity happens on major corridors which define the neighbourhoods and connect the river to the community. On the west side of the site the applicant team has tried to achieve a balance of creating habitat for nature and humans, noting that the West Fraser Lands has an established marsh environment with existing vegetation and shoreline that became a natural fit to extend that look and personality to create a wetland foreshore habitat; whereas at the east connection, the applicant team has developed a strong open space that allows a lot of opportunity for use such as a play field, picnics, gatherings, etc. Both corridors contain foreshore islands although only the east side foreshore island is accessible and the west side island is seen more as a sanctuary.

In terms of the west eco corridor, there will be a boardwalk system incorporated and a natural habitat. At the east corridor there will be an extension of the residential edge and a large expanse of open space which allows for storm water collection and park use.

Marine Drive, in this portion, is read as parkway so the applicant team has reinforced the area with planting, a walkway system and buffering which avoids fencing and backdoor look. The site will have a sizeable urban space with a neighbourhood park and play areas which allows flexibility for neighbourhood use of the space.

The foreshore will have variety and different experiences along the walk. The Kent Avenue side will have more marsh habitat and a boardwalk system to provide reinforcement of the wetland. There will be planting along the walkway towards the water and habitat opportunity for a fish environment. As you move into the main part of the waterfront there will be a harder urban edge as you get closer to the water, with large informal steps or piers that jut out into water itself. There are also plans for a water plaza, not a marina, but a space that creates views out to the river and Mount Baker and is seen as a lively place like Steveston with commercial activity, fish sales, etc.

Mr. Cheng, applicant team, described some of the opportunities to integrate sustainable projects within the environment on site. The site will create water features that use collection of storm water and function as an educational tool and there will be different characteristics along the waterfront that will demonstrate retention of wildlife. In addition, there is a strategy for sustainability with the landscaping and open space planning.

**General comments:**

The Panel members agreed that a lot of thought has gone into this complex proposal and this will be an exciting project. The Panel noted their appreciation for the level of detail in the studies that were done in section, proper street widths and how site circulation will work. A couple of Panel members stated that the relationship with Kent Avenue and the railway feels unresolved and ambivalent. It was questioned whether Kent Avenue could be taken to be a strong organizer with its natural connectivity to the rest of the community.

Generally the Panel liked the landscaping presentation with a few comments for better connections between the green space and the school playfield. The Panel liked the proposed amenities and the public realm experience, noting that it is important for all of the public, not just the residents, to have access to the water. It was also noted that permeability and views

to the water need to be reinforced. One Panel member also stated that it would be nice to have the school and community centre service Fraser Lands West as well.

A Panel member asked the applicant team to consider possible train activity in the future and how those noises and cross sections underneath and over street would have an impact.

**Comments in response to specific staff questions:**

1. **Comment on the neighbourhood centre area formation, east/west street configuration and the strength of the linkage down to the destination at the waterfront. The policy plan talks about a north/south street configuration to draw people towards the riverfront.**
  - One Panel member asked if the patterning needs to extend as far west to south of Kent Avenue or should it define three street nucleus north/south from the high street.
  - Set up the neighbourhood center and create more breathing room as you move away from that. The neighbourhood centre does draw towards the water but it could be stronger in hierarchical density and have more street animation.
  - Not convinced that it is a town square yet, it has a dumbbell effect and should be more like Edgemont or Ambleside centres where it is the heart of the neighbourhood.
  - The neighbourhood centre needs to be constructed in the first phase of the project.
  - Create a range of housing experiences and set the town centre more strongly north/south.
  - Not convinced that the location is right. Appreciate that the location is reaching out to a broader community and it will be helpful for neighbouring residents.
  - There was a suggestion for two main entrances, one to access the urban core and one to access the nature amenities.
  - Street patterning is important. The curvature and variety of streets is good. Try to break up the super blocks with cul-de-sacs etc. The view could also be broken up.
  - The neighbourhood centre is good although the site plan looks at itself in connection to Champlain Heights instead of Fraser Lands West.
  - Give further consideration to the overall alignment and configuration of the spacing of streets, particularly within the centre portion of the site.
  - Consider a secondary retail/commercial piece for Kerr Street. Perhaps the townhouses backing on Kerr Street is not the right approach.
  - The community facilities are well located although the school and community centre relationship could be better investigated.
  - Support the location and ideas of the town square and waterfront centre. Those primary building blocks are very appropriate.
2. **Comment on massing strategy in terms of strategy for tower placement and whether there should be a greater concentration towards the neighbourhood centre area and whether there should be taller elements at all located in westerly and easterly portions.**
  - With respect to the intensity of the neighbourhood centre and tower locations the towers seem to be sprinkled across site and do not create a sense of hierarchy. This site could benefit from a sense of centre and the tower placement could help do that. Look at a greater number of towers and variety of heights to give relief to what could end up being a relentless street wall.

- The policy statement talks of stepping buildings down toward Marine Drive which is almost too prescribed, I like the differentiation in what is being proposed.
  - It would be nice to have more connectivity to the river and space open to the courtyards. A lot of courtyards, in winter months, will be in the shade most of time. Create more diversity in building heights to create more variation.
  - Create a tower pattern that is readable from a distance and has greater order. The towers would benefit from greater patterning without loss of livability.
  - The towers are the central urban piece and they should be more urban, higher, with height concentrated in the centre where the commercial is focused.
  - There is a lack of legibility in terms of reinforcing the differentiation of density. The location of towers feels somewhat arbitrary and doesn't reinforce ideas that are initiated from the outset of the site.
  - There are a number of high buildings which compromise the residential experience in terms of view impacts which is the nature of the street layout.
  - The tower pattern does not seem to be in keeping with the urban approach. Would prefer to see towers in the main commercial section with wider landscaping in other areas.
  - The residential buildings seem to surround everything giving a feeling of being walled in.
3. **Comment on the general scale of the riverfront, particularly with respect to the proposed 3 storey massing along the riverfront and that relationship to the river.**
- Consider variation of heights to the buildings along the river front to open up to the river front particularly where the street ends.
  - Consider connecting to the courtyards bi-secting throughout to get more sunlight and views.
4. **Comment on the general scale and configuration of the typical blocks and general patterning of the taller perimeter block form with the row house configuration in the middle. Comment on whether the mid-block ways, which are presented as pedestrian, bike and emergency vehicle access only, should have vehicle access or remain for the use of pedestrians, bikes and emergency vehicles only.**
- Consider more public streets and break up the scale as you move through at the secondary level. More full use streets for pedestrians and traffic.
  - Would like to see the village square scale brought down so that you don't feel like there are so many eyes on you. Pull those towers towards Marine Way.
  - Suggestion to have the school field area more connected to the open green, natural zone.
  - The townhouses seem to be surrounded by slab buildings which seems quite enclosed. Consider changing heights of buildings or opening the centre courtyards up.
  - Building heights too high near the water.
  - Project would benefit from greater density further up the hill.
  - Consider some stepping down to provide visual relief and a downtown urban type of scale.
  - The sizes of lots are fine and the courtyard idea is a strong and powerful. Make it feel like a public courtyard.
  - There was support for the street pattern and the European flavour and character that it creates.
  - There was support for the general scale although the publicness of patterns and the mid-block need more detail and another layer.
  - The site has been well handled at the Marine Way and Fraser River interfaces; however the rail line and Kent Avenue still need more work.

- The scale of blocks moving from the west to the east was questioned. It was also suggested that reducing traffic in the north/south direction may help.
5. **Comment on general publicness of the mid-block squares that have been indicated as public parks.**
- The super blocks need to be opened up. The mid-block connectors have to be more open to put more life on the street which will also help with making the small open spaces feel more public.
6. **Comment on Marine Way. The objective is for Marine Way to become more of an urban street rather than a highway. Does the setting back give the right signal to cars and trucks that this is a more urban area.**
- The idea of buffering and landscaping for Marine Way is fine and I concur that the neighbourhood centre, in order to be viable, needs to relate to the broader community.
  - Any methods used to slow traffic on Marine Way are encouraged. It was noted that sometimes a centre median with trees encourages traffic to go faster.
  - The proposed buffering along Marine Way is quite nice and will really improve the driving experience on that street.
  - Marine way is just a huge challenge. At grade crossings with a combination of overhead bridges at the town centre which would also link to Champlain Heights at a higher elevation would make sense.

**Applicant's Response:**

Mr. Cheng thanked the Panel for their fantastic comments and said that it is comforting to hear that the Panel is supportive of the town centre idea. Mr. Cheng said that the applicant team will work on tower placement, the scale of the super blocks, and possible relocation of townhouses from the middle of the site and the relationship to Kent Avenue.

At the next step, Mr. Cheng said that the applicant team will present more view studies from Evercrowley Park as well as from the other side of the river, more defined building types, and a lighting scheme.