
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: October 16, 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 (present for Item #2 only)
Jeffrey Corbett
Gerry Eckford
Reena Lazar
Stuart Lyon
Kim Perry
Maurice Pez
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss

REGRETS: Richard Henry
Joseph Hruda

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	550 Taylor Street
2.	Knight and Kingsway - Workshop

1. Address:	550 Taylor Street
DA:	406939
Use:	Residential (26 storeys, 255 units)
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright
Owner:	Pinnacle International
Review:	First
Delegation:	Jim Hancock, Peter Kreuk
Staff:	Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, introduced this application and briefly reviewed the site context. Fairly strict design guidelines apply to this CD-1 zoned site (Phase 2b of Block 17), which prescribe the tower location and the strong streetwall. The guidelines also call for this to be a transitional site which blends at an angle the Gastown and Chinatown grids, to recognize Shanghai Alley and the future Shanghai Mews and to provide a visual link between Shanghai Alley and Andy Livingston Park. The proposal follows the guidelines very closely in terms of tower location and dimensions, with some minor relaxations being sought. Staff are very satisfied with the proposal's response to the street and to Shanghai Mews.

Areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought relate to:

- the 630 m² floorplate size (guidelines recommend 625 m²); tower dimensions of approx. 25 m x 27 m (guidelines recommend 24 m east-west, 26 m north-south);
- whether the east face of the tower should respond to the Chinatown grid, as called for in the guidelines;
- materials and definition of the base, particularly up to the 7-storey height of the adjacent SUCCESS development, and whether the brick should be carried around to the lane façade;
- the interface between the townhouses and the tower.

In general, staff are very supportive of the proposal as part of the rejuvenation of this area.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Jim Hancock, Architect, briefly described the design rationale and responded to questions from the Panel. The Landscape Architect, Peter Kreuk, reviewed the landscape plan.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application and was very pleased to see this site being developed.

The Panel was generally complimentary about the tower form. A comment was made that it shows that a simple, rationalized building can be very attractive. Several Panel members found it somewhat bulky for the site, and a few were concerned that it overpowers neighbouring buildings, in particular the Sun Tower. Most Panel members, however, did not believe the floor plate size needed to be reduced given it is only slightly larger than the guideline recommendation. One Panel member thought the larger floor plate size should be earned through additional architectural detailing.

It was noted the applicant has responded very well to the guidelines, although one Panel member seriously questioned whether the guidelines are appropriate, i.e., whether the tower/podium form of development is right for this neighbourhood. It was thought to have more of a Yaletown look than Chinatown or Gastown.

Two Panel members thought it would be interesting to explore having the east façade respond in some way to the Chinatown grid, although another opinion expressed that the building should not be made to do too much.

The Panel liked the strong townhouse base, with ground oriented units on both sides. Two Panel members thought the townhouses could be higher to create a much stronger urban form.

Most Panel members found the brick on the tower too tentative to be effective and recommended that it be integrated more strongly to avoid an applique appearance.

The Keefer/Taylor corner was considered too weak and its location across from a very major park not sufficiently acknowledged, either in the architecture or the landscape. It was thought there should be something in the design of the end unit to relieve the blank end wall condition. A recommendation was also made for there to be a connection into the courtyard for residents to have easier access to Andy Livingston Park.

Several Panel members were concerned about the tight space between the townhouses and the tower. One member suggested replacing a suite with amenity space, another to make it indoor rather than outdoor space. Two Panel members had less concern and thought it could work.

One Panel member expressed concern about the “slot” under the tower on the west side.

The courtyard was seen by all Panel members as a well landscaped, positive space. Its simplicity was thought to be a very appropriate response. With respect to security gates, one Panel member cautioned that they be designed in such a way that they don’t appear as an after thought. Another Panel member strongly urged that direct access be provided off the street to the courtyard.

The Panel found the nature of Shanghai Mews unclear because the drawings seem to indicate it is a public walkway. Design development is needed so that the townhouses can take better advantage of the space. The use of high quality materials throughout should also be explored.

- **Applicant’s Response:** With respect to the “slot”, Mr. Hancock noted the back wall is glass so the intent is that sun will penetrate down into it and into the lobby below. There is access to the courtyard from the southeast side to access Andy Livingston Park. He agreed that something can be done at the corner of Taylor and Keefer. Regarding the Shanghai Mews, Mr. Kreuk agreed this can be reconsidered, possibly reducing the amount of pavement and increasing the amount of green so that it does not look like a public thoroughfare but a walkway to the private patios, at the same time as being a visual link through the space.

2. Address:	Knight and Kingsway
WORKSHOP	Rezoning
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	CD-1
Architect:	Rositch Hemphill
Owner:	Aquilini Investment Group
Review:	First
Delegation:	Keith Hemphill, F. Aquilini
Staff:	Scot Hein, Pat St. Michel

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, introduced this workshop discussion on the site at Knight Street and Kingsway which has been the subject of a number of previous unsuccessful proposals under the existing C-2 zoning. The current initiative explores opportunities for a rezoning to CD-1 and the Panel's input is sought before a formal rezoning application is made. The community is keenly interested in the development of this pivotal site, in particular for the inclusion of an community amenity such as a library. The purpose of the workshop is to explore options for basic massing, distribution of density and use.

Pat St. Michel, Community Planner, briefly reviewed the history of the site. Safeway left the site in the early 1990's in favour of one further east on Kingsway, placing a covenant on the site which restricts grocery store use to a maximum of 3,500 sq.ft. and drugstore pharmacy use to a maximum of 6,000 sq.ft., so the inclusion of a typical neighbourhood shopping anchor will be difficult to accomplish on this site. The site has been the focus of a great deal of public interest and concern. In each of the past development proposals and inquiries the community has worked with the City and the development proponents to try and improve the fit of the proposal with neighbourhood needs and aspirations. In addition, the site has been the subject of several community workshops and the Kensington-Cedar Cottage Community Vision (approved by Council in 1998) identified this general area as being a priority for improvements, including shopping and housing. Earlier this year, in recognition of the fact that the existing C-2 zoning could result in a development that does not meet the community vision, the City initiated a rezoning to CD-1. This would ensure that any development would have to go through a rezoning process to ensure the development is more tailored to the neighbourhood vision. A no development covenant was implemented in lieu of rezoning at that time.

Ms. St. Michel briefly reviewed the draft Rezoning Policy Framework document which encompasses some of the key elements arising from the vision for the site and from negotiations on various applications in the past.

Keith Hemphill, Architect, reviewed the three basic options, stressing they represent conceptual massing only at this stage, and described the main issues with respect to the site. General discussion ensued and Mr. Hemphill responded to the Panel's questions.

- **Panel's Comments:**

General Comments:

the three solutions are very good starting points;

the project is moving in the right direction and I look forward to seeing it again;

this proposal makes sense;

the economic viability of this project is very important to achieve the community goals;

the inclusion of a food store and perhaps the provision of an indoor space, which could be a library, is a really good amenity for this block and in lieu of that you really do need to have higher density - certainly 3.0 FSR has to be achieved;

the forms of development in all the options have something to offer but they are all a bit foreign to this location - a bit of a mini Metrotown in some ways, particularly Option 2;

the missing C-2 piece is an important piece - I'd really like to see this work as a whole block;

given that the corridor is strongly C-2 the building form isn't all that bad. The retail at ground and three storeys of housing above works really well. I think that heritage of the C-2 coming into this site is the right reference;

I think there is a 4th option that probably is more generated from the C-2 and more sympathetic to it, a little bit simpler massing and maybe one landmark gesture on the corner;

this site is affected by its context more than most because Knight is probably the most brutal street in the city and Kingsway isn't much better;

this site is crying out to have its edges well defined on the Knight and Kingsway sides, and the one place it has a little breathing space is to the south;

the most successful version will include big buildings around its edges with an escape route to the south;

it is important that the C-2 commercial lots off Kingsway are planned into this scheme, recognizing they are not part of the site but the future development of those properties needs to be carefully considered;

the success of the development will result from its edges being developed;

I like the idea of setting the buildings back to provide a wider landscape swath, although it would be a very urban landscape swath; probably the double row of trees idea is the way to go rather than try to do something different;

this is a unique opportunity to do something very important to strengthen the whole neighbourhood and act as a catalyst for future development;

I think Option 2 is going in the right direction;

I don't like Option 3 but both Options 1 and 2 have merits. Explorations in those areas would be warranted;

this will be an exciting development. It has all the right ingredients for uses, both interior and exterior, and if you can manage to incorporate all those ideas it will be a success;

it has to respond to the C-2 context;

strong streetwall is appropriate - I don't support two storeys with something added on;

the building forms in Option 1 are quite foreign and self referential;

the building form should spring from the C-2 streetwall;

I don't like Option 2 as much because it has some of that Metrotown quality to it - point tower solutions are not appropriate here;

I like the basic footprint of Option 3 except that the mass at the corner of Knight and King Edward is wrong - it should be at the corner at Kingsway and Knight;

I like that Option 3 maintains the streetwall on Kingsway and displaces the opening to the adjoining C-2 site, anticipating the potential of expansion in that direction;

an internal space is absolutely crucial but it's fundamental that you have streetwall on Knight and Kingsway, as perforated as you want down on King Edward and leaving as much space as you can for landscaping on the two major arteries and for the internal space;

very excited to see the densities being contemplated here;

Uses:

the mix of commercial office and residential will be excellent on this site;

second storey commercial, even on Robson Street, it is not very successful in Vancouver;

encourage you to consider the second storey for part of the second storey of the library or office space;

the combination of office commercial and residential will make the development very sustainable for the community;

the library is a very good thing - strongly recommend the library finds a space in the development;

it should be a community oriented project first and developer oriented second, so the developer should take incentives based on what the community wants;

the most important thing about this project is deciding who will rent or lease the commercial spaces; most corners are taken by banks, which are good for business but they don't do much for the architecture or for pedestrian traffic;

I would support as great a mix of uses on the site as possible. The greater the mix the greater likelihood of success for a 24 hour experience. Live-work is a good idea because it does add 24-hour a day people on the site;

the interior streets are a very important urban design element to the overall scheme. First of all, consider whether there is the support in the neighbourhood for all that retail edge;

consider how the space functions at night -- who is in there at night or is it gated off? Consider that very carefully;

maybe you should be able to see right through the site from Knight to Kingsway, maybe introducing another smaller pedestrian street into the overall grid. Also might consider that at such a busy intersection the interior space may not be commercial - it could be something that is given over to the residents of the site; perhaps a green space, a quiet outlook and relief from the very busy streets on the outside;

hope the community gets the large supermarket it wants; if that doesn't work, encourage some sort of public market so that it will still be a centre for food Another suggestion is to make room in one of the public urban spaces for something like the farmers market;

it would be nice if the focus of this site could be shifted from a commercial to a community development. The public library is the kind of focus that would help, plus any other of the social agencies that could come together and make it more than just a place to buy groceries;

Internal Lane:

support for the lane being both for pedestrians and cars, serving some of the existing commercial on Kingsway and this development;

support widening the lane and making it very pedestrian friendly;

hope the lane will not be asphalt;

I think the lane needs to function as a lane. It's being asked to do too much in this case. With the C-2 buildings backing onto the lane it will be predominantly functional with loading and parking entries, which is not a nice facade to have across the street from residential. I would encourage using the lane as a more functional area, keeping the pedestrian realm on the outside. It's not that huge a block that needs to have this degree of pedestrian access through it;

this block is going to need a functional access and the lane will serve that quite nicely, particularly if you have some bigger retail components in there. That way the main streets can really be articulated and handled well;

I wouldn't be constrained by the location of the lane unnecessarily, unless there are services going through there that predetermine it has to be left open. If that is not the case then I think the City should consider transferring that land to elsewhere on the site so that piece could be built on;

the reality is that the lane is always going to be the back of those C-2 commercial properties along Kingsway. It's a nice idea but I don't think it will happen. So I think the site needs to deal with that reality and make that possibly more the back of this site and not try and open out into it; despite the attraction of that lane it is probably going to be the place to get into the site: it's there, it punctures right into the heart of the site, so maybe just make it the service area;

it is unfortunate that you don't have access to the rest of the site because the lane in the back will actually be a loading bay for the restaurant and other commercial units - and with the two parking spaces I think it will be very hard to mitigate;

Access

the pedestrian link, which is just an opening through a building that you can come through, doesn't make sense because it's not where pedestrians would want to go. You certainly wouldn't want to cross Knight Street mid block there;

based on the analysis of traffic on Kingsway, Knight and King Ed, the access for cars for the high rise and residential units to be off Kingsway is good;

once the project is sufficiently advanced the pedestrian entry points off Knight and Kingsway will find their own place;

the mid-block arrival and exit points do not seem natural;

be aware of what happens on the street directly adjacent to the site, e.g., look at where the bus stops are, where people gather and stand on the sidewalk to determine logical openings;

there is no mention of public transit;

if there is some sort of higher density at the corner of Knight and Kingsway it should be a really great entrance so that people can come in the building and hopefully walk right through it to get into the public urban space as well; bring the pedestrians directly in at this point rather than making them walk half way up the block;

Streetscape

on this site, being such a significant corner and somewhat a site on its own, continuity on Kingsway and Knight is not necessary. A new streetscape can be established at greater than four storeys;

I would like to see wider sidewalks on Kingsway;

wider sidewalk on Knight;

I think the pedestrian experience along all the streets here is really important so I think the way that's handled in terms of landscaping both soft and hard, the facades the buildings, the uses, the retail, and in some cases the housing, is really important;

Massing Distribution:

it is appropriate to have lower density and height off King Edward;

the tower the locations are somewhat appropriate;

encourage a higher streetwall on Knight and Kingsway;

it may not be necessary to have two towers - it will depend on the leftover FSR and how you want to distribute it;

this high density is quite sustainable but sustainability will have a major impact on the development. The developer must determined the level of sustainability;

encourage some areas such as the middle commercial area to be partially covered to make it more usable and interesting in all seasons;

apart from the corner, the massing should respond to C-2 - not necessarily 3 storeys but it should have a strong 4 storey reference. Above the 4-storey line there's a way of adding two storeys in places that can be articulated differently or set back slightly. But that form of development is more appropriate in this location rather than getting into a complex form of smaller towers and complex low rise;

if King Edward could be traffic calmed a bit in some way, recognizing that it does need to serve a traffic function, there could be a relationship of low buildings with a somewhat permeable edge, providing access to a south facing green space at the south edge of the site;

the 22 ft. grade change is significant and could be used to the advantage of the development of the site plan to create a series of spaces at different elevations and terraces, some on the roofs of parking garages;

I like option No. 2 with the two high rises and the middle courtyard;

look at pushing the buildings out towards Knight and Kingsway, acknowledging that they are incredibly busy streets;

maybe the internal portion of the site is the place to try and provide the public open space and if it's somewhat at the price of a more generous landscape along Kingsway and Knight then perhaps that's something you could look at. You need to look at both and make sure that whatever solution you choose you are doing it well rather than doing two solutions not so well;

the open space in the centre seems to call for a fairly hard open space, not a green lawn but more of an urban space with some of the retail functions at grade spilling into that space providing the energy;

massing of the buildings up to the northwest corner is logical both from the point of view of having a landmark expression as well as keeping the shadows off the internal space;

I would strongly support some form of connection across King Edward to the park. It would be great at grade but if an overpass is the only thing that can be achieved there, perhaps that overpass can connect into an upper level walkway that carries all the way through the site rather than just being the bridge. Maybe there is a second storey of retail or something that provides a through walkway at the upper level which might help address this notion of the lane so that the lane could actually be below and the walkway above to avoid conflict between delivery and pedestrians;

it should not be too grand a departure from C-2 but perhaps a slight densification of that without trying to do a Metrotown which would be the wrong kind of image - keep it fairly simple and logical;

you have to work within the constraints of the site that you have. There is no assurance you will pick up any more of that property along Kingsway so any scheme has to work entirely in itself. However, it also has to work as if these sites will develop as well. At the next stage we should be looking at some trial C-2s on those Kingsway sites because it would be useful with regard to access etc.;

Option 1 probably is the best response to the site in that the mass of the building actually follows in a curve of the site around and what you have shown is fairly straightforward: two buildings of identical height, which may or may not be appropriate. You may want to consider having one higher than the other, or building down towards King Edward and up towards the corner;

the difficulty with Option 2 is that the two towers don't seem to relate to each other with regard to the site itself, they kind of look across the C-2 site, and I find that a bit troublesome;

this site does not support towers very well so I would like to see things kept down;

support the streetwall along Kingsway and Knight;

open to the south and more low rise to the south;

I was attracted to both Options 1 and 2: Option 1 is simple and well defined. Both 1 and 3 are orienting their focus to the corner of King Edward and Knight which I find to be a mistake;

the edges of the site need to be defined very strongly and C-2 should be a starting point. The edges along Kingsway and Knight should be at least C-2. Two storeys is not enough. I would prefer to see the density spread out along the edges with one or two higher places, first at the corner of Kingsway and Knight which would be like a puncture in the form of the triangle;

King Edward could definitely be low rise and residential oriented;

I like the idea of there being an interior space. I think it should be a very public and a very urban space, really bringing people in;

I would strongly discourage you from puncturing the façade along Kingsway. Bringing people in through a porte cochere might work but the façade should be continuous from an urban perspective;

I favour Option 2 because it tends to keep the density closer to Kingsway and away from the adjacent residential areas. It also leaves the open space open to the sun from the south and reflects more of the character of the places across King Edward;

the central commercial space is a good urban design solution, especially being open at one end to the lane for car access;

very excited about the pedestrian-only nature of the central area. Since this is a new development it would be a good example to have part of this area as pedestrian-only;

trying to provide large green spaces as an amenity may be difficult in terms of overview, shadows, locations of the spaces, security, etc. I think will make it difficult to support a lot of these internal spaces;

the smaller external spaces work really well and could be nicely articulated little urban spaces;

Knight/Kingsway Corner

on this triangular site chopping off the corner to a little bit of landscaping is a weak solution;

there are very good urban design solutions where the corner is strongly expressed by a building;

I would look at a higher massing on the corner because of its uniqueness. It could really bear a landmark building and it should be something very unique on the Kingsway corridor;

I would strongly support a real landmark gesture at the corner of Kingsway and Knight, something larger and higher and unique in its form, because of the geometry of that part of the site;

the corner of Kingsway and Knight is a visually very prominent spot so it needs something -- it could have a landmark building or something else with a landmark building offset from it -- some piece of public art, something that makes a very strong statement;

I agree the corner is probably the most logical place to have a statement and a higher form. Certainly filling in the corner is the appropriate thing to do - something that comes out into the corner rather than receding from the corner may be better. A park space is not ideally located there. Better to push the edge out as close to the street as possible and create something with a building;

pushing the buildings right out to the corner is a good idea but consider an entry point into the courtyard at that location. Pedestrians arrive at that corner and that is where people will naturally gravitate into the interior space and through out to the south;

the main expression of this development, if there is to be some concentrated density anywhere, should be at the corner of Kingsway and Knight. For the bigger picture of Kingsway it would be wonderful if Kingsway had attractive, elegant towers at its important intersections;

support a signature building at the Knight/Kingsway corner where it doesn't shade the south facing spaces you would create;

Play Area

the location of the play area is inappropriate because it is on the north side and there would be some shadowing. It is also off an area where there would be both pedestrian and car access. There may be an opportunity to create some kind of L or U shape within the development so that the play area would become more intimate.