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**URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES**

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**DATE:** October 20, 1999

**TIME:** 4.00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Committee Room #1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Joseph Hruda (Chair)  
Patricia Campbell (Excused for Items 1 and 2)  
Sheldon Chandler  
James Cheng  
Per Christoffersen (Excused for Item 1)  
Paul Grant  
Roger Hughes  
Sean McEwan  
Gilbert Raynard (Excused for Item 1)  
Keith Ross  
Norman Shearing (Arrived for Item 2)  
Joe Werner

**REGRETS:** None

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Louise Christie

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<b>ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING</b>
1. 4625 Valley Drive
2. 55-67 East Hastings Street - Lux Hotel
3. 400 Pacific Street

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1. Address: 4625 Valley Drive  
DA: 403589  
Use: Residential  
Zoning: CD-1  
Application Status: Complete  
Architect: Paul Merrick Architects Limited  
Owner: Arbutus Gardens Holding Ltd.  
Review: First  
Delegation: Paul Merrick, Cam Halkier, Graham Fligg;  
Bruce Hemstock - Philipps Wuoari Long, Landscape Architects  
Staff: Ralph Segal, Laurie Schmidt
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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7 - 0)**

- **Introduction:** Senior Development Planner Ralph Segal introduced Laurie Schmidt, the Project Facilitator and asked the Panel to gather around the model. The first complete application for a rental building in this phased-in, multi-city block development has been approved. The next is a market condominium project at the corner of the site at the junction of Valley Drive and Arbutus Street. Since the rezoning, the site plan has been amended in a tighter configuration but is still fairly consistent with the original form of development. The Planning Department raised the same concerns as previously: The roofing materials and the vinyl siding on portions of the facade; and the amount of exposed concrete foundation and retaining wall. The concrete wall at the base of the building seems excessive and could have a higher quality treatment. Previously, the case was argued that it was the rental portion of the complex being considered, and the treatment of rental units is always constrained by budget issues. The remainder of the project is condominiums. Other than the quality of materials issues, Staff have no concerns. The building has the same number of floors, but the roof has changed from a hip-roof to more of a shed-style roof. The building has been shortened and turned to present more of a face on Valley Drive.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mr. Merrick commented that instead of being two buildings that open to Arbutus, the concept has been repositioned into three smaller pieces connected at the south end. This minimizes the openings to the busy street and, by cutting the roof down to get light into the west side, the complex has also expanded views of the park across Valley Drive. Where the roofs generally are more-moderately sloped, they were treated differently than the first 'hip' roof and changed to a 'shed' style, allowing a separation of the upper floor so there are more windows under the large overhangs. Brick chimneys and fireplace vents are built in to give it a residential feel, and wood shingles are used in the recessive portions of the facade. The entrance to the garage has been relocated to where 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue enters Valley Drive. The present location, endorsed by Engineering Services, works well without disturbing mature trees. In terms of the bulk, it was and still is four storeys but with nine or ten more units. These are market, or entry-level condominiums, and to make them affordable the units are smaller. This also allows the softening up of the design of the later, higher-end units and is a way to get better value.

Mr. Hemstock then addressed the landscaping issues. Along the Valley Drive frontage, it begins at 300 mm above-grade and, at the end, it is no more than one meter. On top of the wall is a decorative metal fence as a unifying edge treatment. Because the concrete wall is only a meter high, evergreen vines and shrubs can be planted in front of it to extend the landscape out into the boulevard and to hide the wall. Everywhere else, the building comes down to grade. The courtyard is treated as two spaces. It functions as a shade garden with a restful atmosphere and is the pedestrian entry off of Arbutus Street. But also, it is for viewing, to look into, and more of a formal, passive space. The mature trees are much more dense than around the rental building and give privacy and sense of each unit's individual space. The grade elevation is one metre higher than the ground floor unit. A retaining wall with a ramp for the disabled access is integrated with the wall. The elevation of the wall changes with the elevation of the buildings, so it can be used to advantage with stepping the planters and the kinds of vines and shrubs planted. A detailed inventory of the trees on site has been done by an arborist who will continue to be involved as the site develops. The standard City of Vancouver Tree Preservation Guidelines will be adhered to, as well as a set of Guidelines that were developed at the rezoning stage, including a Letter of Credit, and also guidelines on the treatment of fences around the trees to be retained, maintenance issues, etc. A few trees will be relocated and have already been root-pruned in preparation for being moved. The diversity and interest on the site is being enhanced by looking for unusual specimens that would be suitable for attractive replacement trees.

- **Panel's Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel thought the project, though very dense, was supportable, with the improvement to site planning. The trees help redeem the overall bulk of the massing and the detailing has promise along with the articulation, particularly attractive on Arbutus Street. The colour palette was commented on as favourable, with the red colour being dark and high contrast, with general support for the materials, also. The shorter building opens up views to the park but members thought the flatter roof-pitch lost something in the transition, with a very vertical facade meeting the street. The immense roof was changed for context in the neighbourhood and retention of views but members were concerned that the change from the 'chateau' style roof shown at the rezoning may work here but wondered if the eight or nine storey buildings would read properly without the 'chateau' expression. Never-the-less, the new design was considered a positive and acceptable change. A member suggested that this building should step down with respect to the future neighbour to the east, and another noted that the corner where Arbutus Street meets Valley Drive has been stepped down from the previous design, losing the notable turret on the corner. Another commented that the length of the corridor is very long in relation to elevator locations but the project is still viable. The concrete wall needs design development in terms of articulation and the treatment of the concrete. Privacy concerns were raised but are addressed by big decks with large overhangs and the major trees on site. The Panel requested that, as further buildings are planned, the original design and materials be reconsidered as being acceptable and reasonable. Linking Arbutus Street to the courtyard, through to the opening to the park is a positive development in the site plan.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant appreciates the remarks and will reflect on the Panel's concerns. The total area of the building is the same as the rezoning but the evolution from steeper to flatter roof has made it appear more dense. The issue at rezoning was the height and, in adopting a flatter pitch, the style of the building is changed.

2.     Address:             55-67 East Hastings Street - Lux Hotel  
       Use:                Non-market SRO  
       Zoning:             DEOD to CD-1  
       Application Status: Rezoning  
       Architect:         Gomberoff Policzer Bell Lyon Architect  
       Owner:             Progressive Homes (Builder/Developer) for the City of Vancouver  
       Review:            First  
       Delegation:        Elaine Duvall; Stu Lyon; Patricia Campbell  
       Staff:             Mark Holland, Scot Hein
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**EVALUATION: SUPPORTED (10 - 0)**

- **Introduction:** Rezoning Planner Mark Holland introduced the rezoning for the old site of the Lux Theatre, owned by the City of Vancouver, half a block from Columbia Street and Pigeon Park, currently used as a surface parking lot. The social housing project, funded by BC Housing; is for about 98 units for low-income singles, necessitating the change in zoning from DEOD (Downtown Eastside/ Oppenheimer Official Development District) to CD-1. There are two key issues to be addressed: The amount of FSR being allocated to residential and the height of the building. The zoning allows for 2.0 to 3.0 FSR residential with a total massing of about 5.0 FSR. The proposal is for 4.04 residential and 0.37 FSR commercial, giving a total massing of about 4.41. The height essentially fits into the zoning, except for a one foot extension of the elevator tower above the 30 m limit. The plan is for 98 to 100 units of small suites, generally between 320 and 500 sq. ft. with eight on the second floor large enough to accommodate wheelchairs.

The area surrounding this proposal of nine stories, is buildings of various heights. Many are two and three storey brick buildings, and others nearby, like the Van Horne, are nine and ten storeys. To integrate it into the facade of the streetscape, the building has been broken into three visible units from the street, one wing being three storeys and the other, five. The height is approximately 26 m, with the extra height over the 30 m limit being the elevator shaft. It will impose on the view column of the Van Horne Development by about 20 percent. The materials are concrete and brick with metal detailing, double-hung wood windows, awnings and de-mountable metal cornices. Generally, the comments received from the public have been favourable to the urban form, the materials and the general massing, with the few opposed concerned with the Housing Policy for low income singles in the Downtown Eastside. Finally, CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) concerns about crime in the area have raised a long list of small changes to be made, to address issues like the alcove off the lane and the potential of roof-hopping.

Mr. Hein spoke of the context of the massing in the neighbourhood, listing other successful developments like Van City Place for Youth, and the adjacent existing heritage. He requested the Panel's suggestions on how to: Relate to the heritage features; successfully change materials from one 'building' to another, strengthen the cornice line; and deal with the massing at the penthouse level. These are, however, considered to be minor concerns for a project like this. Staff are enthused with this project and would appreciate the Panel's advice, particularly concerning the treatment of cornices if they project over the property line, as relates to Engineering Services's concerns.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Stu Lyons reinforced a few of the comments of the Planners. The very strong streetscape along Hastings Street of 25 ft. lots in an irregular rhythm allowed the
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evolutions of a unique streetscape and the design preserves this aspect. The four, 25 ft. modules accommodate the small units very well, allowing 8 modules across the front of the 100 ft. lot size. The mass of the building in the middle keeps the strong context along Hastings Street. The side walls in from the property line allow windows for the occupants, provide light to the back of the site for the amenity space and add character to the building. The ground floor will contain 3 commercial units and common amenity space for meals and leisure time. The wheelchair units on the second floor can also access the roof-deck terrace. One level of parking underneath accommodates all that is needed. The detailing of materials will need to be carefully worked out to make it recognizable as one project, with the windows being consistent across all three facades but the materials breaking it up to give it more definition. There is a small amount of rooftop landscaping, organized for the common area on north side of building, designed to thrive on little maintenance and little sun. There is a security issue along the lane so the wall there was designed as a barrier to keep people from climbing or looking in. There is a seating area with small courtyard, with open doors from amenity areas for fresh air, to enable residents to go out for a cigarette and to still be under cover. The two amenity areas can also make visual contact. The curve reflects curve in floor plan. The Panel was reminded that this project is at the rezoning stage.

- **Panel's Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel were unanimously supportive of the relaxations for height, density and use, particularly as there is a need for this kind of housing in this part of town.. The layouts of the units are small and could be enhanced with further windows looking out on the two roof-tops for a sense of openness. Some panel members suggested that possibly utilizing them as safe, out-door green space would benefit the project in this area where there are few parks and little private out-door space. Concerns were expressed that more windows or access to roof-tops would impinge on privacy and/or cause security issues but more openness was never-the-less encouraged. A suggestion was made for consideration of lighting at night.

The overall design augmented the historical context of the area. Engineering Services should look beyond encroaching agreements with a more sensible approach to cornices and parapets on buildings, which keep weather off the front and are important to enhance the heritage character. Because of the height, the cornices would never have to be dismantled. The two problems with current policy is that cornices are pushed back because of the need not to infringe on the property line, and the detailing becomes cost consuming. Another member encouraged the applicant request the use of concrete on the cornice and its encroachment specified as a condition of rezoning. The fabric canopys' colour, size and material as relates to the streetscape was questioned but it was noted also that the lobby entrance was well articulated from the other entries. It was also requested that more street trees be planted on the 100 ft. frontage. The applicant was congratulated on the project being so well resolved in many respects at this stage.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant appreciated all the comments that will be added to by the Planning and Housing Departments, as well as being integrated into the Development Permit submission right after rezoning. He thanked them for their support.

3. Address: 400 Pacific Street  
 DA: 404504  
 Use: Residential  
 Zoning: CD-1  
 Application Status: Complete  
 Architect: Hancock, Bruckner, Eng & Wright, Architects  
 Owner: Pacific Place Holdings Ltd.  
 Review: First  
 Delegation: Jim Hancock, Jeff Christiansen; Bill Harrison (landscape architect),  
 Mike Harrison of Concord  
 Staff: Jonathan Barrett

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**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (10 - 1)**

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, the Development Planner, introduced this complete application for the first of four buildings in the large precinct of Beach Neighbourhood in False Creek North. There are minor changes in this area, bounded by Homer, Beach Avenue and Richards Street, and in the next three to four months there will be three more buildings coming to the Panel. Part of the agreement at the rezoning stage was that the precinct would be developed conceptually further prior to the first application. He invited the Panel to gather around the model of the proposed Landmark tower which expresses the density and general form that was approved at the rezoning.

There are four major towers with lower forms in the development that are all market units, except for two, lower storey non-market which will be built when there is funding. This site is large and irregular with a sizable park of six acres to be called George Wainborn Park to be delivered at the 620<sup>th</sup> unit's occupancy. In response to questions about the overall design of Beach Neighbourhood, Mr. Barrett responded that he had been advised that there will be different architects for each phase. The major feature, apart from the four towers, is the day care centre which will be built when the 175<sup>th</sup> unit is occupied. This proposed Landmark tower is above the 300 ft. limit by four storeys and it has been designed as a twin to the Landmark tower in the Beatty Mews precinct. The existing Landmark tower adjacent to the Cambie Bridge is off the grid to orient to the south westerly views but this tower is not.

The design must relate it to the other as they are to be perceived as a set. The floor-plate sizes of both the typical and top storeys are slightly larger than what they are supposed to be; this will be addressed as conditions of approval.

Comments are of a minor nature and concern the form of the 15,000 sq. ft. 'super club' which will provide an amenity facility for the whole block. At the rezoning stage, the neighbours objected to its height of four storeys which impeded some views but the redesign at two storeys is seen to have a weak roof form. Also, the commercial/retail has been moved from this area to the

project on Richards Street and Panel commentary on this aspect would be appreciated. Another comment was on the vehicular access and trellising, and also a main door which seems to disturb the strength of the prow form. The last issue is the public plaza which is largely water. Does it need to be more prominent in the vertical sense to tie it to the tower; should there be more planting; and also, does it fit in with the locality, or does it need a more distinct presence for passers-by on Pacific Boulevard and Homer Street. The drop-off access is from Pacific Boulevard and the access to parking from Homer Street. Also, because of reducing the length of the 1-B tower base, it expands the daycare site, giving it a bigger frontage. There have been some very good urban design refinements since the rezoning stage.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Mr. Hancock addressed the issue of the curvature of the proposed tower, and said it was in response to the other Landmark tower. The rounded end of the amenity building is most important to the roof-form and in response to the people who live adjacent, the height has been kept down but not flat. The water of the plaza is treated so plants would have to be in a planter set in the water. At this time, a stage has been created and there will be further development when an artist's submission has been received. Mr. Harrison, the landscape architect, further elaborated on the water feature, noting that the water source was dynamic at one end, and the other end is passive and visual. This being Beach Neighbourhood, the concept was to bring the sense of West Coast to the urban landscape. There is driftwood, rocks, a flat beach and areas where people can sit. The concept of sustainability is being incorporated by using the water that falls on the surface before it gets to the storm drainage and planting thickets to attract birds. Other areas of plantings and lawns tie the project in with future George Wainborn Park, as does the pedestrian mews.
- **Panel's Comments:** After reviewing the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel felt the design was elegant and the project supportable with some further enhancements and refinements. With the extra height, the tower feels like a landmark building but there were comments concerning how it fits in the skyline, the treatment of the top of the tower which should carry the elegant simplicity through, and the colour palette which is too subtle. Colour could be used to augment the 'mast' on the 'prow'. Suggestion was made regarding the orientation of the tower as being more appropriate as an 'off-grid' building in view of its landmark status and location on the curve of Pacific where it changes into Pacific Boulevard. A slight shift would orient its axis perpendicular to Pacific and enhance its perception as a landmark as well as relating its curved facade more sensitively to Homer Street and improving views to the west between other adjacent towers. Another comment concerned the mast edge treatment as perhaps being more appropriately located on the opposite side of the tower facing the water side with another treatment for the City facing portion. The pedestrian mews should be made to feel more welcoming as an access point right down to the waterfront and it should extend right out to Pacific Street, so the vehicular drop-off will have to be reconsidered. The entry ramp to the garage needs treatment in terms of reducing its visual impact. As it is a vertical community which will surround the project overviews of the amenity roof were important and should be enhanced with landscaping, patterning and/or a waterfall but the metal edge treatment was considered a positive expression. A linear skylight to reflect the length of the pool was another suggestion. The transparency of the amenity building is very intriguing and when lit at night, would shine through the landscaping. Some members felt the retail/commercial not being integrated into the sports amenity was unfortunate but retail should be in a vital area of the neighbourhood and for some, moving it to Richards Street was a positive development.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant thought the comments were good and would take them into consideration.