

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: October 29, 2003

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Stuart Lyon, Chair
Helen Besharat (arrived 5.00 pm)
Jeffrey Corbett (present for Items 1 and 2)
Bruce Haden (arrived 5.00 pm)
Reena Lazar (present for Items 2 and 3)
Brian Martin
Sorin Tatomir
Ken Terriss
Mark Ostry
Jennifer Marshall (excused Item 2)
Eva Lee

REGRETS: Kim Perry

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	955/69 Burrard Street - Workshop
2.	901 Mainland
3.	325 West 59th Avenue

BUSINESS:**C-2 Guidelines**

Reena Lazar reported on Council's recent approval of revised C-2 Guidelines. Maximum permitted height has been increased to 45 ft. and maximum density slightly decreased. Adjustments have been made to the rear setback requirements. There is a requirement for a 2 ft. front setback, and for the fourth floor to be set back 8 ft. at the front of the building. In addition, Council has requested staff to report back with respect to parking requirements for C-2 developments.

Higher Building Review

Staff: Michael Gordon, Ralph Segal

The Panel reviewed some notes prepared by Jennifer Marshall, outlining the Panel's concerns about the higher building review process.

With respect to the need for consistency when there is a change in Panel members, the Panel agreed it is not a concern provided the other issues are addressed. It was agreed to remove this item from the list. The Panel also agreed to amend item 5. to change "height" to "incentive".

The Panel strongly supported the recommendation that high building applications be reviewed first as Workshops, and for any invited guest architects to be included at the conceptual stage (prior to a review that includes a vote). This will ensure that outside expert input is more appropriately given at the very preliminary stage of a project.

In discussion about the number of sites that might have the potential to be developed with a very high building, Michael Gordon suggested there may be two or three sites remaining, at most.

Ralph Segal noted that Planning staff consider Urban Design Panel reviews of preliminary development applications and rezoning applications to be very similar to workshop level discussions given these projects are at the very initial stages of design. In discussion, he said staff would strongly support the Panel's recommendation to bring in outside expertise as early as possible. Staff acknowledge the process for the 550 Bute application was not very successful.

The Chair stressed that the Panel's recommendations are intended to improve the process in the future.

The revised recommendations to the Planning Department are as follows:

1. *Ensure the application is complete, i.e., all parts of the project are drawn. This is baseline;*
2. *Encourage a package that clearly lays out the concept(s) for the project. We feel that having a strong concept helps the building to rise to the level of architecture expected - having to illustrate one may push the bar higher.*
3. *The high building applications should come through as Workshops first to establish the criteria for meeting architectural excellence.*
4. *Clarification of the "excellence" paragraph in the guidelines is required. We believe you can to some extent qualify what is expected as part of this: a strong concept, a skyline persona (who is this building?), responsible approach to environment (LEEDS sliver as a minimum), a positive contribution to the culture of the city, a positive contribution to the physical city, etc. A project must be more than the sum of its parts.*
5. *Consider granting extra incentive to projects done as open competitions.*
6. *Clearly communicate to the developer that a higher standard is applied to these projects.*

1. WORKSHOP:	955/69 Burrard Street
Use:	Mixed
Zoning:	CD-1
Applicant Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	Stantec
Owner:	First Baptist Church & YMCA
Review:	First
Delegation:	Alan Endall, Chuck Brook
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett, Phil Mondor

Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, introduced this workshop discussion on a rezoning proposal for two adjacent sites on the west side of Burrard Street between Barclay and Nelson Streets. The sites currently contain the Downtown YMCA at 955 Burrard Street and the First Baptist Church (FBC) at 969 Burrard Street. The proposal is a collaborative effort between the two sites. Mr. Barrett stressed that the focus of the Panel's advice should be on the urban design issues to provide some direction to the applicant before making a formal rezoning application. The rezoning application will be reviewed by the Panel before it is forwarded to Council.

The proposal for the FBC site is a 28-storey residential building and a mid-rise (approx. six storeys) ministry building associated with the church. The proposal for the YMCA site is to retain the front portion of the existing heritage building, to rebuild the YMCA facilities and construct a residential tower above. Staff have identified very few issues with respect to the FBC site. There are two main options for locating the tower on the YMCA site: at the west end of the site or on Burrard Street. Built form and scale relationships is a major consideration for determining the tower location.

With respect to the YMCA site, the advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- Tower location and how the different locations relate to the context;
- Tower height;
- Tower floorplate sizes; the shape and size in relationship to its context;
- How the heritage YMCA building can be accommodated on the site;
- Building character;
- How the forms perform with respect to their context and how much density can be achieved on this site.

The main issue for the FBC site relates to the built form relationships.

Alan Endall, Architect, described the proposal in greater detail. He noted the two primary issues are the location of the residential tower on the YMCA site, and what height is appropriate for this tower. He reviewed the rationale for the two options for tower location. In summary, Mr. Endall said they believe the west location performs better against the criteria than the Burrard Street location.

After the applicant responded to the Panel's questions, the Panel provided the following commentary:

Tower location:

The Panel unanimously supported locating the tower at the west end of the site which allows the important heritage YMCA to remain its distinct character on Burrard Street. There was one recommendation to consider shifting the tower slightly towards the east, but still at the west end of the site.

Other comments on tower location were that the most important factor is the dominance of the institutional presence of the YMCA on Burrard Street as opposed to a residential tower presence. Also, the west location of the tower allows for a more honest heritage retention of the YMCA.

Tower height and scale:

- some discomfort with going over 375 ft. because it results in a difficult transition to the West End. It will also be an uncomfortable situation for any future development to the west of the tower.
- stepping the building to the west may not be essential; it has to do with how that façade is detailed and the livability of adjacent spaces, among other things;
- support the extra height (to 410 ft.);
- no concern about the overall height of the tower. I am comfortable seeing a taller tower and higher density on this site because it would relate better to the Wall Centre which is currently quite dominant on the skyline;
- the scale of Burrard Street is very important; prefer a lower building - it seems a bit aggressive in the context;
- support a higher building to provide a better relationship to Wall Centre as well as future high buildings (approved but not yet built); it will contribute to the skyline;
- a 6,800 sq.ft. floorplate still results in a slim tower at this height;
- this site can accept additional density;
- the trade-off for the developer is that a much lower building is more appropriate in the western location whereas it could go much higher located on Burrard Street;
- extra density and height (410 ft.) should be earned by some contribution to the City, including meeting high building standards;
- exceeding 375 ft. must be earned and specific benefits should be identified at the rezoning stage;
- would like to have seen a different orientation for the tower.
- the 6,800 sq.ft. floorplate produces an elegant tower form;
- support up to 450 ft.; don't believe it will impact the neighbourhood to the west;
- floorplate size is appropriate;

- for the height and density being sought there is not yet a strong commitment to sustainability in terms of tower form and orientation;
- at the submission stage it should meet the level of architectural excellence.

Building character:

- appreciate the sustainability aspects - having as much transparency as possible in our climate is an appropriate character;
- comments on building form and character would be premature, but there is nothing to indicate any cause for concern at this stage;
- delete the canopies on the existing YMCA;
- recommend having the tower express in some way what is happening inside in the YMCA;
- the heritage retention of the YMCA could be extended further down Barclay Street;
- strong support for keeping the YMCA entrance off Burrard Street;
- at the next stage consideration should be given to the outdoor space for the proposed daycare.

First Baptist Church Site:

- No concern about the church site;
- The two projects appear to have no relationship to each other.

The applicant team was complimented on the very thorough presentation package and analysis. The Panel looks forward to seeing the project at the rezoning stage.

2. Address:	901 Mainland
DE:	407235
Use:	Residential (3 towers, 725 units)
Zoning:	DD
Applicant Status:	Complete after Preliminary
Architect:	Dirk Buttjes
Owner:	332392 BC Ltd.
Review:	Second
Delegation:	Dirk Buttjes, Jane Durante, Bruno Wall
Staff:	Jonathan Barrett

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-3)

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, presented this complete application. The Panel unanimously supported the preliminary submission which was also approved in principle by the Development Permit Board on April 14, 2003. The application proposes three towers, each of which has been increased by one storey since the preliminary stage. There has been an adjustment to the floor-to-floor heights but there is little change in the overall height. The current application also proposes a heritage density transfer of 22,000 sq.ft., a substantial amount of which has been put into the base of the development which is now three storeys townhouses (previously two storeys). Vehicular access is off Mainland with an auto court, and off Nelson Street, with an exit onto Homer Street.

After a brief review of the Panel's previous comments, Mr. Barrett noted the following areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought on this complete submission:

- whether the extra 22,000 sq.ft. of heritage density (<4 percent) can be comfortably accommodated on the site;
 - whether there is any concern about the slight increase in tower heights;
 - whether the base has been appropriately increased in height and strength;
 - the design of the park;
 - any comments on the intent to frame the park and pick up on the dock character of Yaletown;
 - CPTED aspects of the proposed (limited access) public right-of-way.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Dirk Buttjes, Architect, referring to massing comparisons between the preliminary application and the current submission, stressed that the additional density has gone into the base and an increase in the number of townhouse units. A previously proposed community space for the Vancouver Opera Society has now been replaced with townhouses, and more density has been added to the base of Tower C to give it more of a warehouse character. Jane Durante briefly described the landscape plan and the design team responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel's Comments:** The Panel supported this application. The Panel thought the additional density had been accommodated very well, and had no concerns about the small height increase.

The Panel found the park to be very interesting and one of the nicest aspects of the project. The choice of materials was strongly supported and the Panel looks forward to seeing the park completed. It was stressed that the detailing will dictate how successful it will be, and one Panel member cautioned of the need to be aware of the long term maintenance of park furnishings.

The Panel had a lot of comments about the public walkway through the site. The Panel generally thought it should be more generous and inviting. There were CPTED concerns about it being crowded with too much vegetation. Breaking up the greenery to provide opportunities for direct overview from units above was recommended. One Panel member suggested eliminating the central row of trees and also questioned whether there should be an access stair between the courtyard and the walkway. The Panel strongly recommended that the staircase be broadened with a view to providing a stronger connection between the walkway and the park and making it more accessible and inviting, which would also contribute to addressing any safety issues in the walkway. A suggestion was also made to shift the alignment of the walkway to provide a visual connection to the auto court to give an improved sense of security. While the Panel was enthusiastic about this project providing a shortcut through to the Library Square Precinct and the theatre district, some Panel members had concerns about how well the walkway will work with the proposed limited access times and whether it would cause confusion for the public.

The Panel had concerns about the access to the public parkade and it was suggested the stair and elevator might be combined to greater effect. There was a suggestion that a pedestrian entrance at the corner of Mainland and Nelson might be more appropriate; it would also contribute to screening the park from Nelson Street.

With respect to the base of the project, the Panel supported the extra density to give it more strength. There were concerns, however, about the appropriateness of the townhouses on Mainland. In particular there were concerns about the livability of the townhouses which have the auto court at the rear. The base at the corner of Mainland and Smithe was considered to be weak and the most successful townhouses were thought to be those around Tower A.

While the Panel considered the project to be texturally rich at the lower levels, there were concerns about the towers appearing somewhat monotonous and repetitious. While it was acknowledged that this site may not be appropriate for a "signature" building, it was suggested that one of the towers might be given greater differentiation. Some Panel members thought the light coloured painted concrete could be improved upon and a number of Panel members were concerned about the scattered use of brick throughout the project. Some thought the earlier recommendation to introduce the Yaletown character had not been fully addressed. It was suggested that the gesture to Yaletown shown on the south side of Tower C be wrapped around to the Mainland side. With respect to the brick, one suggestion was to confine its use to one of the towers as opposed to using small amounts on all the buildings. Proper detailing of the brick will also be very important.

The sustainability elements that have been incorporated into this project were acknowledged and supported. It was noted, however, that none of the tower facades respond architecturally to their specific orientation. Measures to address heat gain, such as brise-soleil elements, not only contribute to the project's sustainability but also provide an attractive marketing tool.

The Panel expressed some concern about the interior layout of some of the units, with particular regard to the current requirements for handicapped access to washrooms. It was noted that in some cases there are washroom doors opening into dining/living areas, which is not appropriate. It was recommended that some of the unit plans be revisited as well as pedestrian circulation in terms of ease of access from the underground parking to townhouse entries which is somewhat circuitous for some of the units. A suggestion was made to consider introducing some doors directly into units off the corridor.

There was a comment that the trellis over the lane may be visually restrictive to pedestrian traffic moving through the site.

One Panel member noted the inclusion of enclosed balconies which appear to be proposed as breakfast nooks or dens, which may be a zoning issue that needs to be addressed.

- **Applicant's Response:** With regard to the suggestion to introduce a stair between the courtyard and the walkway above, Mr. Buttjes pointed out that at the preliminary stage the previous Panel requested its removal. With respect to the location of the elevator to the parkade, he noted it also provides handicapped access from the upper level to the park level as well as to the parking. There is also access to the elevator at the lane level. With respect to the restricted use of the walkway, Bruno Wall explained it will be managed by a legal agreement with the City. It will be closed between 10.00 pm and 6.00 a.m. Mr. Buttjes said the trellis over the lane is intended to provide a clear direction to the parking.

3. Address:	325 West 59th Avenue
Use:	Residential (3 storeys, 43 units)
Zoning:	CD-1
Applicant Status:	Rezoning
Architect:	Integra
Owner:	Langara Development Corp.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Chuck Brook, Dale Staples, Michael Patterson
Staff:	Dave Thomsett, Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-3)

- **Introduction:** Dave Thomsett, Rezoning Planner, presented this application for a Text Amendment to an existing CD-1 zoned site. The site is heavily treed and contains an attractive dry stream bed. It currently contains a small (vacant) seniors' care home. In 1996 it was rezoned from RS-1 to accommodate a seniors' care facility at 1.0 FSR and the form of development was approved in principle by Council. The rezoning proposal removed all the trees and the stream bed but the project did not proceed. The subject application proposes 43 townhouse units at 1.0 FSR, with 86 underground parking spaces accessed off Columbia Street. The southwest corner of the site will be enhanced and the old dry stream bed given recognition. In addition, the developer has agreed to make a financial contribution to the City for improvements to the trail along the rear of the site, at the edge of the Langara Golf Course. A 10 ft. acoustical barrier will be provided to shield the development and the neighbourhood from noise from the Works Yard. As well, a gravel dump will be relocated into the Works Yard. Fire access is off 59th Avenue. The neighbours are generally in favour of the proposal, although some would prefer to see all the trees maintained. While retention of the trees is not possible, the southwest corner of the site will be considerably enhanced.

Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, advised there are no major urban design issues with this proposal. She stressed the significant public benefit of the improved walkway at the rear of the site.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Chuck Brook noted they have worked with staff to modify the scheme to maximize the amount of on- and off-site public benefit in the form of open space and landscape improvements. While there is no requirement for a Community Amenity Contribution on this site, the developer has agreed to provide the equivalent of a CAC in the form of off-site upgrades. Mr. Brook said there has been very positive response to the proposal from the community. Michael Patterson, Landscape Architect, briefly reviewed the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Comments:** The Panel strongly supported this application.

The Panel was very pleased to see this project taking advantage of the old dry stream bed on the site. However, several Panel members thought the enhancement of this feature could have instructed more of the layout of the scheme itself, rather than isolating it at the corner of the site.

Although the Panel supported 1.0 FSR for this site, there were concerns that the project looks very dense and "tight", in part due to the rigidity of the site plan. Several suggestions were made to loosen it up, including possibly deleting a unit to free up more space, and re-thinking the circulation patterns around the site. Thought should be given to how the residents will get in and out of their units and around and through the site. In particular, the space between the northerly units (along the edge of the golf course) and the north-south

rows seems tight. Access to the children's play area should also be given careful consideration, and to ensure it is in a sunny location.

The rigorous site plan may also be the result of providing twice the required number of parking spaces in the underground parking area, which tends to dictate the site layout. Several Panel members questioned the provision of so much parking and there were suggestions to consider opportunities for using parking spaces for other functions as well. The introduction of natural light into the parkade was recommended, and to reconsider the location of the parking ramp between two townhouses.

While the site plan suggests a path through the north end units to the golf course walkway it does not carry through. It was suggested that this should be a real connection, or delete it.

Several Panel members had concerns about the architectural expression of this project. In general, the Panel is not in favour of "pseudo heritage" and was disappointed that the applicant had not chosen a more modern expression that takes advantage of this unique site.

With respect to the Columbia Street improvements, a recommendation was made to handle the street end a little more sensitively than a hammerhead.

With respect to the density, one Panel member, while supporting 1.0 FSR as being quite livable for this site, felt the scheme was very dense for the amount of public benefit it offers. It was suggested that an option that might be negotiated with the City would be for some of the units to be designated as realistically affordable.

The Panel considered the unit plans to be excellent.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Brook stressed that the CD-1 zoning of this site is not for a Special Needs Residential Facility but for a market seniors' facility, at 1.0 FSR. It was also zoned to have the site virtually cleared and with no community amenity contribution. He said a number of the Panel's comments are very constructive and they will work with them. He explained that their general approach is to try and achieve the full 1.0 FSR of the current zoning, animating the edges of the site so that it relates well and enhances its relationship to the streets as well as to the park and the heavily used pedestrian pathway. They have tried to create a relatively dense, livable family environment but the Panel's comments about the rigidity of the layout are well taken. Mr. Brook stressed that they have also been able to organize the site to respond to the environmental sensitivities around the dry stream bed while recognizing there are also very substantial existing open space amenities in the area.