

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** October 7, 1998

**TIME:** N/A

**PLACE:** N/A

**PRESENT:** Joyce Drohan (Chair)  
Patricia Campbell  
Per Christoffersen (excused Item #1)  
Geoff Glotman (excused Item #1, absent Item #3)  
James Hancock  
Joseph Hruda (absent 3)  
Peter Kreuk (excused #2 and #3)  
Sean McEwan  
Norman Shearing (excused Item #1)  
Peter Wregleswortgh (excused Item #1, absent #3)

**REGRETS:** Sheldon Chandler  
Jim McLean

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

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### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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| 1. | 500-800 & 900 Canada Place Way (Trade & Convention Centre) |
| 2. | 940 Seymour Street   |
| 3. | 3200 East 54th Avenue (Champlain Mall)                     |
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**1. Address: 500-800 & 900 Canada Place Way (Trade and Convention Centre)**

Use: Trade and Convention Centre

Zoning: CD-1

Application Status: Development Agreement

Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey & Zeidler

Owner: Greystone Properties

Review: Third

Delegation: Frank Musson, Arthur Erickson, David Galpin

Staff: Ralph Segal, Michael Gordon

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**EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-5)****Introduction:**

Ralph Segal, Development Planner, first reviewed the sequence of events involved in processing this proposal which will be dealt with by City Council in December, in a similar manner as a rezoning application. The Panel reviewed the proposal in July 1998 in a workshop, at which time the Panel expressed considerable concerns about the hotel massing and the massing of the phase two building. The Panel also stressed the need for a much stronger definition of the plaza. Other issues related to the floating walkway and preservation of the Granville Street view corridor. As well, there was a call for a stronger sequence of physical and view elements down Granville Street to the site, and the need for a stronger element at the end of the pier.

Mr. Segal reviewed the revisions made to the proposal since the July workshop, and asked the Panel to comment particularly in the following areas:

- the revised retail building (whether it needs to be simplified and to respond to well established existing axes; whether the one-storey projection on the plaza side should be pulled back to provide a full two-storey edge);
- the Granville Street view corridor (whether a larger slot can be created);
- the new pedestrian street;
- the plaza design;
- the pier extension, hotel podium roof and ballroom edge.

Mr. Segal noted that while the program for the proposed phase two building is less defined at this stage, there is some concern about potential view blockage.

**Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

Frank Musson, Architect, reviewed in greater detail the latest revisions to the project, and Arthur Erickson, Architect, described the plaza design.

**Panel's Comments:**

After reviewing the model and posted materials, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel had a number of major concerns and did not support the project at this time. In general, it was felt the proposal lacked the qualities needed for what will be Vancouver's primary waterfront public open space. The Panel looks forward to seeing something a great deal stronger in the next submission.

**The Plaza:**

There was clear consensus among Panel members that the plaza is very much in need of stronger definition in order to create an urban public place on the waterfront. While somewhat improved since the last review, it was felt the scale of the elements defining the plaza needs to be carefully reconsidered. The very large size of this space calls for more than 40 - 50 ft. high buildings at its edge. Conventional weather protection devices are also inappropriate. Rather, it was recommended a solution be found that responds to the grandeur of the whole plaza - an architectural element that ties the buildings together much more strongly and gives a sense of scale to the plaza edge, at the same time as providing weather protection. Such an element might be used to cross some of the pedestrian openings into the plaza which, while it would need to be very sensitively done, is something that would give a great deal more strength to the plaza. A further benefit would be that it could help to link some of the very disparate elements in this scheme, which is also something that is somewhat disturbing in the current proposal.

A number of comments were made about the orientation of the plaza, with recommendations to explore some of the geometries that reflect more the direction of Canada Place. The current orientation of the tower is now starting to swing and reflect the sense of the direction of the pier, and this was seen as an improvement since the last review; however, it was felt more needed to be done to give a strong sense of orientation out to the water and the mountains rather than the side of the pier.

**Hotel Tower:**

There was general support for the reshaping and orientation of the hotel tower; its curved, slim shape was thought to be a big improvement over the previous submission. There were, however, concerns expressed about its intrusion into the Seymour Street view corridor. There were also strong concerns about the enormous size of the hotel podium footprint which is as large as the plaza itself, particularly in terms of its impact on views from land to the east that will ultimately contain residential development. There were recommendations to achieve some penetration, possibly with a route through as well as a visual indication of what lies beyond this very large building. Notwithstanding the programmatic implications, some public permeability would offer a more convenient way through than the current circuitous route around to the north or south. The roof of the hotel podium also needs to be carefully considered, both in terms of overlook from above and as a potential activity space. It has a lot of potential for programming, e.g., expansion of the health club, jogging trails, tennis courts, that can work quite well with the hotel. There are also some interesting opportunities for introducing some patterns in the roof landscape for the benefit of those looking down on it.

**Phase Two Tower:**

With respect to the phase two tower, while it was recognized this part of the program is not clearly defined at this stage, there were concerns that it seems somewhat like an afterthought. It was stressed that this building cannot be a "stand alone" but must fully complement the hotel tower.

**Water's Edge:**

The Panel remained concerned about the treatment of the water's edge and felt the appropriate continuity and character was not yet being achieved. Panel members were not convinced that the floating walkway was contributing to the goal of providing the linkages and connections that help knit the city together. It still seems a bit mean and minimalist. A strong connection from the east portside all the way through along the water's edge and up into the plaza is lacking and the floating ribbon walkway seems to be a lost opportunity. Another suggestion was to consider an extension to the floor slab of the prefunction area (similar to what now occurs at Canada Place), to provide a better integration of semi private space and public realm. The prefunction space currently seems very exclusive, with the floating walkway tacked onto the side of it, which feels a bit uncomfortable.

**The Retail Building/Linkages:**

Much of the commentary on the retail building focused on the openings through the building in plan and the fact that there seems to be little continuity to the mass as it meets the ground. It is important that this project provide some very strong linkages to the open space network in this part of the city. Although there has been some gesture towards making the connection to Granville Square, much more could be done. The square is in a primary location but currently is quite inactive; anything that this project can do to bring it back to life would be a positive move. The Panel thought it needed a very strong connection at the upper level of the retail building, possibly including some retail to encourage pedestrian activity.

There was general support for the more narrow, angled connection at the termination of the Cordova connection. It was strongly recommended that greater emphasis be given to the Seabus connection to make it a more celebrated, apparent part of this project. Burying it in the structure of this vast convention space would be very unfortunate whereas integrating that movement of commuters through and making them part of this development would be a positive step. One suggestion was to pull open the hotel podium to provide a strong visual link to the Seabus. It was also suggested to discuss with BC Transit the possibility of bringing bus service down to Canada Place Way.

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In general, the Panel felt that as Vancouver's primary waterfront public space, the project especially needed to address its potential in terms of public amenity, i.e., the waterfront walkway, the connections to other public spaces (especially Granville Square), commuter connections and, most importantly, the plaza edge.

**Applicant's Response:**

Mr. Galpin noted an overriding consideration has been the provision of a 1,000 ft. cruise ship berth on the east side of the pier so that splaying the geometry to correspond with the orientation of Canada Place would be virtually impossible to achieve, noting also the physical constraints of the 250,000 sq.ft. exhibition hall and a fixed south property line. He said he did not believe the orientation of the space is defined by the angle of Canada Place, rather towards the northshore mountains and the harbour beyond, which they will attempt to illustrate more fully at the next stage. With respect to the Seymour Street view corridor, Mr. Galpin noted that opening up the Seymour view corridor more would adversely impact the view from Gastown, so they think the proposed location is a reasonable compromise, noting it does respect the eastern edge of Seymour Street. He commented that some impact on views is inevitable with a 1,000-room hotel and it becomes a question of balance and trade-offs. Regarding opening up the connection to the plaza, Mr. Galpin noted the west connection is about 200 ft. wide which they believe is appropriately generous. The floating walkway is not intended to be a major access to the water; the experience of being at the water's edge is expected to occur on the east lands. Extending the floorplate of the prefunction area over the water as a replacement for the walkway would do little for the precinct, noting the extensive walkway that already exists at Canada Place. Mr. Galpin acknowledged the hotel has a very large footprint, however, penetrating it, either for view consideration or physical access, would render the ground floor of the hotel dysfunctional. Finally, Mr. Galpin stressed that this is a rezoning application and much work remains to be done. The issues that can be dealt with will be addressed.

2. **Address: 940 Seymour Street**  
DA: 403485  
Use: Mixed  
Zoning: CD-1  
Application Status: Preliminary  
Architect: Buttjes Architecture Inc.  
Owner: Wall Financial Corp.  
Review: Second  
Delegation: Dirk Buttjes, Peter Kreuk, Bruno Wall  
Staff: Mike Kemble
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## EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

### Introduction:

Mike Kemble, Development Planner, presented this application. The Panel did not support the project when it was reviewed on September 9, 1998, the main concern relating to the massing of the tower. There was strong support for the proposed 6-storey streetwall. Mr. Kemble briefly reviewed the significant changes that have now been made to the scheme, and asked the Panel to comment specifically in the following areas:

- tower massing and fit of the tower in its context; overall reduction in the sense of bulk; podium height and massing;
- corner treatment;
- landscaping.

### Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Dirk Buttjes, Architect, reviewed the various options that were considered at the rezoning stage, and distributed a diagram showing the development potential of the neighbouring Dufferin hotel site. He noted they are exploring different options for the retail space and are reconsidering the 9 ft. floor-to-ceiling height in the townhouse units in order to achieve a height reduction of approximately 7 ft.

### Panels Comments

Following a review of the model and posted drawings, the Panel offered the following comments:

The Panel unanimously supported this submission and commended the applicant for the massing studies which were very helpful in the review.

In general, the Panel found the scheme considerably improved. There was support for the reshaping of the tower and a comment was made that the asymmetric floorplate is a clever response to the challenge of this particular site context. The Panel also supported the 80 ft. separation that has now been achieved with the adjacent tower.

The proportion and height of the low rise mass was generally supported. A number of suggestions were made to reconsider the façade on the courtyard side, to improve its visual experience and reduce the feeling of a single loaded exterior corridor scheme. The 7 ft. overall reduction in the height of the low rise mass was generally supported, with one recommendation to retain the 20 ft. height in the retail space which was thought would be a refreshing change in the Vancouver streetscape. There was strong support for the smaller retail units which will contribute to the grain at street level. One Panel member found the penthouses a little heavy, and questioned the slots in the mass between in terms of overshadowing.

Some comments were made that the corner treatment of Seymour and Nelson was not entirely convincing, and a suggestion that the previous submission was a little simpler and probably more successful. Two suggestions were made for giving the tower a clearer expression as it meets the podium and the street, perhaps to pull in the low rise where it meets the tower and try to create greater differentiation.

With respect to the adjacent Dufferin hotel, there was a call for further development of the façade treatment facing the hotel, and a suggestion that it might be useful to see some greater elaboration of the potential impact on suites.

The treatment of the lane was generally supported. The setback should allow for a substantial amount of planting to soften the wall. One Panel member suggested putting townhouses at the lane edge as an alternative solution which would improve the lanescape.

**3. ADDRESS: 3200 EAST 54TH AVENUE (CHAMPLAIN MALL)**

DA: 403146

Use: Mixed

Zoning: CD-1

Application Status: Preliminary

Architect: W.T. Leung Architect

Owner: Champlain Properties Inc.

Review: First

Delegation: Wing Ting Leung, Paul Kwasnicky, Chuck Brook, Jane Durante

Staff: Eric Fiss

**EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (1-4)****Introduction:**

Eric Fiss, Development Planner, presented this application for the Champlain Mall site. The overall proposal is to reduce the mall to the supermarket, drug store and a few retail units. In addition, three free standing components are proposed, one of which would relocate the medical/dental offices at 54th and Kerr. The Champlain Branch Library would also be redeveloped and enlarged to a ground floor oriented location in the mall. The residential component will contain 196 townhouses and 126 apartments in two buildings. Underground parking is proposed. The site is organized with two streets, one of which relates to two existing access points, which will be public as far as a cul-de-sac, then a private road to the precinct to provide access to the underground parking. The proposal is being processed as a preliminary development application, with consultation with existing mall tenants and neighbours, following which Council's approval will be sought for the form of development.

The advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- the scale of the form of development;
- the reconfiguration of the mall;
- the form of the residential components and the roadway system of public and private streets;
- the location and amount of park space and treatment of the edges.

The proposed density would be 0.9 - 1.0 FSR for the townhouses and 1.25 FSR for the apartments. Commercial density is about 0.4 FSR. Setbacks are 5 - 8 ft. on the commercial street edge and 20 ft. for the residential components. Total site density is about 0.8 FSR. Height ranges from 35 ft. for the townhouses to 50 ft. for the apartments..

**Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

Chuck Brook provided some background on the proposal. The current owners acquired the property in 1997, by which time Zellers, which is the primary commercial anchor for the Champlain Mall, had already given notice that they intend to close their store. The mall is no longer the regional shopping centre it once was and its role is changing to neighbourhood-serving. Mr. Brook explained that this proposal is essentially a master plan for the whole development which will be carried out in phases over a 5 - 6 year period. He emphasized there will be no net loss in commercial serving retail, given the departure of Zeller's in any event, along with a number of small apparel stores attached to it. The emphasis for the residential component will be on family housing. The value of the voluntary amenity contribution is about \$1.3 million. These amenities, based on feedback from the community, include the redevelopment of the library and contribution to a seismic shelving system, a community policing facility, a preschool facility, construction of four additional classrooms to the adjacent Captain Cook elementary school, and a financial contribution to the Champlain Heights Community Association for the upgrading of a fitness facility at the community centre.

Paul Kwasnicky, Architect, explained the three commercial buildings will be built first and existing tenants will be given the opportunity to relocate. A major goal is to give the retail components a strong street presence and weather protection around it. The new retail component will have a pedestrian scale. Wing Ting Leung, Architect, briefly reviewed the residential component, noting they have attempted to mass the housing so that the higher portions are in the middle of the site. Consultation with the neighbourhood has determined the proposed routes through the site. Jane Durante noted the site is surrounded by existing mature vegetation, as much as possible of which will be retained.

**Panel's Comments:**

Following a review of the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel did not support this application.

Most of the Panel's concerns related to density, particularly on the residential component, and the rigid way it is distributed over the site. It was described as being too homogenous and unnecessarily relentless, especially given the opportunities for creating something much more interesting on this site., e.g., more distinct clusters of units surrounding somewhat more generous open spaces. In general, much more should be made of the open space opportunities.

The Panel saw a serious need to address the potential congestion problems and day-to-day operations on the site (e.g., garbage, mail, visitors locating units, etc.), and to provide much more outdoor space. The Panel was particularly concerned about the east-west pedestrian linkage. Given it is the primary outdoor space on the site, it deserves special treatment to celebrate the various events along that route, including the park, the daycare, and the termination at the mall. Materials, lighting and furniture should be considered for making this connection and much more interesting space.

There were serious concerns about the proposed library entry and some suggestions to reverse the position of the library and its associated drop-off area to the westerly, more public side of the building. The easterly side would then become the access point from the school and for the residents of this development. There were concerns that having the public entry on the easterly side would cause traffic congestion problems within the residential component. As much buffering as possible on this side of the mall will be beneficial. Some Panel members felt strongly that there should be a route through from one side of the retail to the other, and that the pedestrian walkway needs to terminate in something more generous than the doors to the library.

The Panel generally felt the character of the residential component was quite nicely handled but had some discomfort with the architectural expression of the retail building which currently seems too appliqué. The southeast façade of the mall needs special attention given its proximity to a number of residential units. Reducing the amount of retail to become more community oriented was seen as a positive objective for the neighbourhood.

In general, the Panel felt the overall site plan was uncomfortable and that the proposal fails to take advantage of the opportunities available.

**Applicant's Response:**

Chuck Brook said they will continue to work on the proposal and take the Panel's comments into consideration. Mr. Leung stressed there are front and back yards to all the units, which may not be readily apparent from the site plan.