

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 1, 2004

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Mark Ostry, Chair
Larry Adams
Robert Barnes
Jeffrey Corbett (present for Items 2 - 4)
Alan Endall
Marta Farevaag (present for Items 3 and 4)
Ronald Lea
Margot Long (present for Items 1 - 3)
Brian Martin

REGRETS: Bruce Haden
Steven Keyes
Jennifer Marshall

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

| ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. | 1285 West Pender Street ("Evergreen") |
| 2. | 1280 West Pender Street |
| 3. | 872-98 Seymour Street (887-97 Richards) |
| 4. | 1299 Seymour Street (Liberty Building) |

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|----|-------------------|--|
| 1. | Address: | 1285 West Pender Street ("Evergreen") |
| | DE: | 408570 |
| | Use: | Mixed (14 storeys) |
| | Zoning: | DD |
| | Applicant Status: | Complete |
| | Architect: | Nick Milkovich |
| | Owner: | John Laxton |
| | Review: | First |
| | Delegation: | John Laxton, Arthur Erickson, Nick Milkovich, Steven Cox |
| | Staff: | Ralph Segal |

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-1)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this application to convert the "Evergreen" building from its currently predominant office use to predominantly residential use, and to add four floors to the building. The change of use is permitted under the DD zoning which identifies this area as "choice of use". A recent policy decision requires that all such conversion requests be reported to City Council, in response to a concern about the trend to more residential and less commercial use in the Downtown, particularly in the Coal Harbour area. The subject application was therefore reported to Council which indicated it did not oppose this conversion.

The proposal is to add four storeys to the building, maintaining the existing terraces and planting, and add two-storey townhouses on the Hastings Street side of the project. The intent is to maintain the integrity of the existing building. There will also be seismic upgrades to the building to meet code requirements.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the concept of the proposed additions

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Nick Milkovich, Architect, advised the requested additions will increase the density from 4.9 to 6.0 FSR. He briefly described the proposal and stressed that the intent is not to replicate the existing building but to contrast it and make the additions as light as possible. Following a brief description of the landscape plan, the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

The Panel generally supported the concept of adding floor area to the Evergreen, but cautioned the applicant to move "carefully but boldly" in altering this downtown icon. There was particular concern about the landscaping which the Panel unanimously recommended be reduced on the upper storey additions. In general, the Panel recommended further design development and urged the applicant to do everything possible to equal or improve the existing building given its existing landmark status in the city.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel strongly supported this application and thought the proposed addition had been handled in a way that is very sympathetic to the design intent of the original building. A comment was made that it also works out very well structurally in terms of the floor plans for the residential conversion.

Other suggestions/comments about the 4-storey addition included:

- the extra height is fairly modest and helps to bring this building into scale with some of its neighbours;
- would like to see more articulation relative to the rest of the building;
- the addition tends to throw off the existing balance of the building somewhat;
- it would be more successful if it were a little lighter and airier;
- recommend stepping back the addition from the existing 10th floor, or the upper three floors from the 11th floor;
- the addition preserves the integrity of the original building by being different;
- the addition would look better, proportionally, with one less storey; it looks top-heavy.

The Panel expressed concern about the amount of landscaping on the additional floors. It was suggested that continuing the ivy up to the addition detracts from the intent for it to appear as a separate object and a "lantern". It was generally thought the concept for the addition would be more pure without the ivy. There was also a strong recommendation to delete the trees from the top, including from the elevator penthouse. The green roof was strongly supported, although one Panel member was disappointed that the top deck was not a common amenity for all the residents. With respect to the ivy, it was noted that this species is causing problems in the city and perhaps should be reconsidered.

It was thought there may be privacy issues for the suites at the southwest corner of the Pender elevation.

There was a recommendation with respect to the concrete on the east elevation, to change the texture of the concrete on the addition. Since it will be next to impossible to match the original, a noticeable difference will ensure it does not look like a mistake.

One Panel member expressed disappointment that the addition and alterations were not improving the building, in particular the southwest corner where the glass no longer comes down to the ground on Pender Street and the corner has been filled in. Reconsideration of the way the stairs have been handled was also recommended.

The opportunity to upgrade and animate the Hastings streetscape with the addition of the townhouses was welcomed.

Some concerns were expressed about the Pender streetscape which is quite harsh at a pedestrian level. There was a strong recommendation from one Panel member for the City to craft some guidelines for the Pender streetscape so that there is some continuity with the newer developments and to avoid each developer doing different things.

- **Applicant's Response:** With respect to the concrete, Mr. Milkovich explained the seismic upgrading requires there to be a completely new concrete wall. He thanked the Panel for its comments which he said will be taken into consideration.

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| 2. | Address: | 1280 West Pender Street |
| | DE: | 408652 |
| | Use: | Mixed (28 Storeys) |
| | Zoning: | DD |
| | Applicant Status: | Complete |
| | Architect: | Busby & Associates |
| | Owner: | No. 249 Cathedral Ventures Ltd. |
| | Review: | First |
| | Delegation: | Peter Busby, Greg Smallenberg, Martin Nielsen |
| | Staff: | Ralph Segal |

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Development Planner, presented this application in this 'choice of use' area in the Downtown District. The application seeks the maximum permitted density of 6.0 FSR, plus a 10 percent heritage density transfer. The proposed height of 300 ft. is permitted under the zoning. The proposed uses are commercial at grade on Pender Street, townhouses on Melville Street and residential above. The applicant's response to this unusually shaped site is a Flatiron building.

Staff generally support the proposal and note one major issue which relates to the location of the tower and its impact on the Pointe Claire residential tower on Melville Street to the south, noting that the Downtown District Design Guidelines call for shaping towers to minimize impact on both public and private views. The impact of the proposed massing on the Pointe Claire would be significant wherever it was located on the site. However, its proposed location at the westerly end of the site, as opposed to an alternative location towards the interior of the site, heavily impacts the views from the Pointe Claire through the Jervis Street right-of-way. The applicant has carried out an extensive view analysis indicating the impacts for the proposed tower location as well as at the easterly end of the site.

Staff strongly support the townhouses on Melville Street and the commercial uses on Pender Street are strongly encouraged. The Triangle West enhanced sidewalk treatment will be sought on this project.

The advice of the Panel is sought on whether the project can accommodate the additional 10 percent heritage density, the tower shape, massing and location, in particular its proposed location at the west end of the site vs. an alternative to the east.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Peter Busby, Architect, described the design rationale. With respect to the tower location, Mr. Busby said the results of the view analysis are inconclusive: some residents in the Pointe Claire will have their views impacted in any tower location. Mr. Busby said he believes that while the two alternative tower locations are comparable in terms of view impact the chosen location allows for a more distinctive architectural solution. He stressed there is a strong commitment to sustainability. Greg Smallenberg briefly described the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.

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

There was unanimous support for this application, with the caveat that it is essential that very high quality materials and details are maintained through to completion of the project.

There was unanimous support for the tower location as proposed at the westerly end of the site.

Suggestions for design development:

- Ensure the continuation of street trees on Pender Street;
- The Melville townhouses should be brought out to the street edge to define it.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel had no doubt that this site can accommodate the density being sought.

The Panel also unanimously supported the applicant's proposed location for the tower on the site. Some of the comments on the tower siting included:

- There is an inherent conflict between the interests of some private owners and the interests of the shape of the city;
- The view study is very complete and exhaustive but inconclusive;
- The shape and location of the tower also works well in terms of its relationship to the Evergreen building;
- The proposed tower location is best for the city;
- If the tower was moved to the east there would be a serious proximity issue;
- The detrimental impact on the Pointe Claire is unfortunate but it is a fact of life;
- The City has set the tone for the sea of towers in this area so one more from a view standpoint is really not really an issue at all; it's more an issue of getting some dramatic architecture on some of these streets;
- It is a relatively small floorplate and is in the right location;
- The strong architecture of this building is a community benefit that overrides loss of private views.

The Panel unanimously endorsed the proposed flatiron form and thought the site demanded that this form be taken advantage of. Overall, the Panel thought the project had been very deftly handled and found this a rare opportunity to let the site set the shape of the building. Some Panel members questioned whether the flatiron form could be stronger and suggested the architect re-examine the expression of the point which is quite truncated. The suggestion was that it seems to be denying the flatiron possibilities. There was also a comment that it seems to lose something at grade; if the sharp point came right down it might be more interesting. Because of the importance of this location, the Panel thought the quality of the architecture, materials and details should not be compromised.

There was strong support for the townhouses and for the internal courtyards, but no support for the way the units are stepped back from the street. The applicant was strongly urged to bring them out to create a stronger streetwall edge, possibly incorporating the change in grade within the unit or within a small side yard.

The applicant was strongly encouraged to complete the pattern of street trees and to do everything possible to enhance the quality of the streetscape. One Panel member felt that the

success of the project, especially on this very unique site, is not only in the architecture of the building but at the pedestrian level. Serious concerns were voiced for the current Pender streetscape which has far too much concrete, and it was thought that this site perhaps deserves a completely different approach, including the City allowing the applicant to go beyond the property line and develop to the curb.

Other comments and suggestions included:

- the trees under the eyebrow may not work;
- there is a need to strengthen the Pender Streetwall;
- the canted fin wall on the Melville Street frontage is somewhat flimsy and gratuitous; it also further impacts views from the Pointe Claire;
- suggest increasing the depth of the balconies to create a stronger repetitive horizontal along the prow of the building;
- question whether the applicant explored an alternative massing, perhaps a lower building (12 - 14 storeys) at almost full site coverage;
- question the location of the residential lobby at the corner. It would be better on Pender Street.

With respect to the public realm on Pender Street, the Panel urged that the City develop some guidelines for this location because developments to date have achieved less than expected results.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Busby expressed his appreciation for the Panel's input. He agreed with the Panel's recommendation with respect to the townhouses on Pender Street, and with the request for more street trees. With respect to the treatment of the corner, Mr. Busby noted that sharpening the point results in a wider building which impacts more views.

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| 3. | Address: | 872-98 Seymour Street (887-97 Richards) |
| | Use: | Mixed |
| | Zoning: | CD-1 |
| | Applicant Status: | Rezoning |
| | Architect: | Brook Dev. Planning/Paul Merrick |
| | Owner: | Solterra Dev. Corp. |
| | Review: | First |
| | Delegation: | Paul Merrick, Greg Borowski, Chuck Brook, Mike Bosa |
| | Staff: | Jonathan Barrett |

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-3)

- **Introduction:** Jonathan Barrett, Development Planner, presented this rezoning application comprising two adjacent sites, one having a frontage of 150 ft. on Seymour Street and the other a frontage of 200 ft. on Richards Street. Existing DD (Downtown South) zoning permits a height of 300 ft. and 5.0 FSR (2 FSR commercial + 3.0 FSR residential). The proposal has a commercial retail base with townhouses along Richards Street and four or five levels of above-grade parking above the retail commercial base and residential above. The proposal is for two towers, 292 ft. and 330 ft., with an overall density of approximately 9.29 FSR (about 2.0 commercial + 7.1 residential). The application seeks a heritage density transfer.

As well as general advice on use, form and density, the advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- overall legibility of the project in the greater city context;
 - relationship to surrounding development;
 - form and character of the towers and the relationship between the two towers; appropriateness of 330 ft. in this 300 ft. zone in terms of view and shadow impacts;
 - character of the lower level uses, with particular emphasis on the above grade parking;
 - livability, noting a separation of 75 ft. between the two towers;
 - the amenity package.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Chuck Brook explained there are currently two above grade parking structures on the site which are well used, particularly in the evening by Orpheum patrons, and during business hours. Civic Theatres has confirmed the importance of replacing this parking and the proposal is to provide it within the project, above grade. Private residential parking will be provided below grade.

Paul Merrick, Architect, noted the sites are between the business district and the theatre district and each frontage has a different nature. He briefly described the overall rationale for the scheme and Greg Borowski, described the architecture. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Challenges still remain on this project;
 - General support for the uses;
 - General support for the above grade parking but there should be increased visibility and honesty in its expression. Reduce compromises to increase its functionality and ensure its visibility;
 - No clear consensus on whether the site can accommodate the density;
 - General support for the pairing of the towers but varying commentary on the height.
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- **Related Commentary:**

Density

- Concern that the density, which is being pushed up by the above grade parking, has focused a lot of weight over the proposed entry;
- It feels like a lot of density although it integrates quite well in the neighbourhood;
- It is very dense due to a higher than typical podium, but a higher podium is appropriate, especially towards the CBD;
- with better treatment of Seymour and maintaining the 80 ft. separation, generally the density could be achieved;
- this whole project is about a search for balance - 9.29 FSR is still fairly dense, but the site can support it;
- I'm somewhat uncomfortable with the density; a lot is being squeezed onto the site; it is also being challenged by not only the parking but the setback along Smithe which I think is a good move but is challenging the ability to fit everything onto the site.

Lane/Residential Entry

- The proportions of the space below the above-grade parking compromise this area as a good residential entry; a lane entry is more desirable provided the conditions are improved, otherwise the entry should be relocated to the street;
- I like the residential entry and drop-off in the lane but it needs more breathing room; it would help and get some landscaping in there as well as hardscape;
- The lane needs further development, which could be in the form of treatment of elements;
- The success of the residential entry is critical; if it doesn't work it will be deadly; it needs special paving and lighting;
- I would prefer the residential entries to be on Smithe.

Massing

- I like that they are paired; like the relationship of them together;
- the floorplates seem too big;
- the paired towers are interesting and unique to the area and that is a benefit;
- I like them being different heights and in this respect would support the additional height because it's better than pairing them at the same height;
- there is no shadow and view impacts on surrounding towers;
- the towers should be the same height;
- some concern about the proximity of the two towers to each other; 75 ft. is close even with the same architect in control; I would prefer to see a pair of towers skewed to meet the standard 80 ft. separation;
- it would be more interesting if the solid part of the tower was the main expression rather than the octagonal part;
- the twisting of the living areas is interesting and addresses the need to meet the 80 ft. separation;
- No livability concerns relative to the separation of the towers but question whether they need to be so relentlessly symmetrical;
- The pairing is a welcome departure from the staggered approach;
- Question the different heights; the heights seem arbitrary;
- Spatial separation between the towers is okay, particularly by directing views on the bias;
- Support the character of the towers; the pairing is a refreshing change;
- The difference between 75 ft. and 80 ft. separation will not make or break livability, although if the 80 ft. is critical it could be achieved with smaller floorplates and increased height;

- the tower mass being relatively tight to Smithe helps with shadowing beyond;
- the twin towers are acceptable;
- if the towers were staggered there may be better amenity space of the podiums;
- whatever can be done to minimize the interface between the units on the lane would be beneficial;
- the height is pushing the limits;
- I like the scale of the podium; the height is acceptable;
- This is an appropriate form for the area and the higher podium relates well to its context.

Above grade parking

- Very supportive of the above grade parking;
- It could be expressed more as parking - trying to disguise it as parking is probably not the best approach;
- You could probably delete the micro offices and increase the parking; this might allow more breathing room in the lane which is where it is not working very well;
- Conditional support for the above grade parking provided it is easily accessible and visually open at the upper levels to allow daylight and views through;
- Strongly support the above grade parking if it is convenient for theatre patrons and if it is a highly visible and efficient parking garage; the parking should not be "squeezed" and hidden with different uses around it;
- the design of the parking garage seems very tight and the pedestrian connection to the Orpheum could be a lot better handled;
- I agree with deleting the micro offices and doing something architectural to acknowledge that it is an above ground parking lot;
- If the City has agreed that the above grade parking is a given then it should be expressed as parking and not something different;
- The above grade parking is an interesting addition and something not seen very often in the Downtown;
- It is a viable use; it can add to the mix of uses on the site and create a much more integrated and urban kind of structure, although it is a challenge to do it effectively;
- Trying to disguise the parking is not only somewhat of a contradiction but is compromising achieving an efficient and legible arrangement and expression of the parking;
- I would like to see more studies for alternative layouts for the parking with fewer dead-ends and contortions; let it be a simple expression of a parkade - particularly on Seymour Street - and emphasize the relationship of the entry in the garage (vehicular and pedestrian);
- Consider adding another bridge link to really join the sites and achieve greater efficiencies for the parking garage across the full width of the site;
- The way the parking creates an abrupt change between the podium and the tower is somewhat awkward; the only location the towers come down to grade is on Richards Street;
- Exposed parking on Seymour must be really well designed to celebrate the use and make it as much fun as possible;
- I would rather not see the parking exposed on Smithe and Richards Streets;

Street Uses

- I like the townhouses on Richards but they should be less residential in character (perhaps live/work) close to the urban core;
- The uses on each of the streets are handled appropriately;
- Strongly support the widening of Smithe Street - this will be a huge asset with the theatres nearby;
- Seymour Street should be further emphasized as a retail street;

- Locating the residential entries on Smithe Street is totally undesirable but they are fine on Seymour and Richards Streets;
- The setback on Smithe is terrific and a good benefit for outdoor cafes;
- Concern that Seymour Street is getting short shrift and not being treated as well as the other streets;
- The residential on Richards seems left over space; it would be better as retail;
- Agree the townhouses on Richards are probably well suited to Yaletown but not necessarily north of Smithe;

Amenity Spaces

- The amenity spaces above grade seem like left-over spaces;
- The amenity package is not very clearly articulated and could use some clarification;

Public Art and Sustainability

- although the project seems to be celebrating the car it would be good to include some level of sustainability, even thinking ahead to a time when perhaps people will not come downtown in their cars;
- Hope public art is included as a criterion for the bonusing.

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| 4. | Address: | 1299 Seymour Street (Liberty Building) |
| | DE: | 407723 |
| | Use: | Residential (34 storeys) |
| | Zoning: | DD |
| | Applicant Status: | C/P |
| | Architect: | Paul Merrick |
| | Owner: | Cressey Seymour Dev. Ltd. |
| | Review: | Second |
| | Delegation: | Richard Lindsay, Paul Merrick, Greg Borowski |
| | Staff: | Anita Molaro |

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Anita Molaro, Development Planner, presented this complete application. The Panel supported the preliminary application in August 2003. The discussion at the preliminary stage concerned whether the site could accommodate a single or two tower scheme. The Panel supported a single tower approach. The Development Permit Board initially deferred approval subject to further analysis of a two vs. single tower solution and further consultation with the neighbourhood, specifically the residents of Space. Exhaustive view analysis was conducted and in December 2004 the Development Permit Board supported a single tower approach on this site with conditions to address the relationship with Space, including slimming the tower at the southerly corner and reducing the amount of view cone blockage to a maximum of 31 degrees and reducing the floorplate to about 5,700 sq.ft.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the resolution of the design in response to the conditions applied by the Development Permit Board. Comments are sought on the interface with the Liberty Building, the ground plane treatment, materials and detail expression of the building.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Greg Borowski, Architect, reviewed the changes to the scheme since the preliminary stage. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application.

The Panel stressed that the Downtown South Streetscape Guidelines should be fully met, in particular with respect to alignment of street trees. Some improvements to the general landscape area were also recommended.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel was satisfied the application responded well to the preliminary conditions which were noted as being quite prescriptive. It responds well to the neighbours.

The Panel found the interface with the Liberty Building to be well handled and there was strong support for heritage recognition of the building. Some Panel members suggested a complete disconnect would honour it more as a heritage piece. The applicant was urged to restore the building to its original level of lightness and transparency. There was also a recommendation to find a way to tell the story of the Liberty building, possibly within the breezeway.

The applicant was urged to ensure the street trees and more orderly and consistent. The Panel generally found the response to the Downtown South streetscape guidelines to be quite weak. There was also a preference indicated for a wall edge transition with some secure patio space rather than the mounted transition up to the townhouses shown.

Concern was expressed about the entry with the risers and a handicap lift which looks a bit institutional. The recommendation was that a ramp would be preferable.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Borowski advised the canopies will be removed from the Liberty building. The intent is to restore the building much more closely to its original appearance so the windows will be repaired. There is also opportunity to add a sign band, similar to the original. Richard Lindsay added they will be restoring the original colour of the building.