

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 13, 2006

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Walter Francl, Chair
Nigel Baldwin
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
Tom Bunting
James Cheng
Bill Harrison
John Wall
Peter Wreglesworth
C.C. Yao
Margot Long
Albert Bicol (Item 1, 2 and 3)

REGRETS: Eileen Keenan

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** L. Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	833 Homer Street (formerly 400 Robson Street)
2.	4887 Cambie Street
3.	1695 Main Street
4.	SEFC Parcel 9

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Francl called the meeting to order at 4:15 P.M.

Mr. Francl announced some news regarding Walmart. A reapplication submission has come in and the proposal is that it not come before the Urban Design Panel because it is essentially the same submission that the Panel saw a year ago.

1. Address: 833 Homer Street (formerly 400 Robson Street)
DE: 410566
Use: 29 Storey Residential With Retail, Daycare And Office On First To
3rd Floors
Zoning: DD
Application Status: Complete
Architect: IBI/HB Architects
Owner: Robson & Homer Development
Review: First
Delegation: Jim Hancock, Martin Bruckner, Jennifer Stamp
Staff: Francisco Molina

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (0-9)

- **Introduction:** Francisco Molina, Development Planner introduced this application which is in close proximity to the tower seen at the last UDP. Referring to the model Mr. Molina described the project, which is a complete development application and is located at 833 Homer Street on the south west corner of Robson and Homer. It is located within the Robson Street and the Library Square precinct. The site is approximately 26,000 square feet. The view cone covers the area but doesn't have an impact on the maximum height of the area. Some of the buildings in the area are of a similar height. There is the recently approved Symphony Place at 31 storeys and there is a potential park planned for the area and the project will retain retail along Robson Street at ground level. The height and mass have no major shadow impact on Library Square. The height is 300 feet and the shadow projects overlap with the Bing Tom tower. The building will have four levels of underground parking. There will be a restaurant and shops at ground level with the 2nd and 3rd level for office space with a couple of residential units and daycare on the third level. There is a 2 FSR for the office space with a maximum of 5 FSR in the area and 2 FSR being commercial and 3 FSR being residential. Level 5 to 29 have 183 residential units making 7.99 FSR in total. The additional density of approximately 60,000 square feet is a bonus resulting from the provision of the daycare. Access to the residential tower and the office level are from Homer Street with loading and parking access on the lane. The tower to the south has a new building in front with a separation is 130 feet and to the north east the separation is 80 feet with good views still available.

The areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought include:

- Comments on overall massing, character, form of proposed tower in regard to its context. Has the additional density been satisfactorily incorporated in the proposal;
- Comments on overall expression of the podium in relationship to its urban context (including the Library Square character guidelines). Materials, character, colours;
- Comments on the entrance area to residential tower and interface with podium of existing development to the south;
- Articulation of the tower facades, especially the south elevation; and

- Stepping, forms and overall treatment of the top of the tower.

Mr. Molina took questions from the panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Jim Hancock, Architect described the proposal in greater detail. Jennifer Stamp, Landscape Architect discussed the public realm and other details of the landscape plan including the daycare area and roof top garden. Martin Bruckner, Architect described the materials being used as well as the shadow study summary. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Major concerns about the sunlight in the outdoor space for the daycare;
 - Concerns about the density bonus relative to what is given back;
 - Design development to strengthen the residential and office entries and rework the live/work space to improve liveability;
 - Further development of the podium level to improve the relationship with neighbouring buildings and streetscape.
 - While the massing of the tower is generally good, the expression of the tower needs further development, particularly at the top.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel did not support this application.

There were some concerns about density as the building seems too high and it seems to loom over the Library open space.

The Panel felt the residential entry is weak although the commercial entry could be more attractive with some detailing. One member of the Panel felt it pinches the retail and thought it could be moved back a bit to open up the space.

There was a major concern about the location of the daycare. The Panel felt it would get very little light and is in the shadow of the adjoining building to the south, this being the primary activity space for the children

The amenity on the main landscape roof will make a nice view for the residents and will be well used. The Panel felt that the entry from the building was problematic. Getting from the elevator and past two units and a stairwell to get to the roof doesn't work. Would like to see it changed so that when coming off the elevator the view is through the amenity space to the roof top garden. Could add some more to the program with a 2nd floor amenity along the lane. The best part is the garden plots.

The two live/work units at the entrance are not really liveable and not very private.

The Panel liked the lane treatment and the way the car entry is tucked under the building.

One member of the Panel felt it was a lost opportunity at Robson and Homer and could be used as a gesture to Library Square, emulating the stepped forms. The form and character of the neighbour has already been established so this site needs to have some sensitivity to the existing context.

The expression of the tower needs a lot of development. The piano curve loses its continuity. There is not enough of it to envelop the expression of the curve. The top is weak in its detail.

One member of the Panel felt that the terracotta didn't work well with the rest of the material and would like to see more rough or solid material on the podium and the tower. As well the balconies have sharp corners that don't work with the design of the building. The tower plan shape is seems over articulated with many materials and colours.

The Panel felt that the podium responded poorly to the adjoining building to the south.

The ground floor seems plain and does not seem as though it would support much street activity. The street fronting retail should encourage activities that animate the street, such as coffee shops and restaurants o enhance the activities in Library Square. One panel member would like to see some trees added to the street.

One member of the Panel had some concerns with the liveability in the suites, given their large glazed areas and south-western exposure. Some units may overheat in the summer with all the glass.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Bruckner, Architect thanked the panel and commented on the daycare area. They did do a sun analysis and it exceeds the standards for daycares. Jennifer Stamp, Landscape Architect pointed out that the City of Vancouver has a prescribed program to provide physical structure for children.

2. Address:	4887 Cambie Street
DE:	Rezoning
Use:	3 unit fee simple rowhouse
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Art Cowie
Owner:	Consumers First Ltd.
Review:	First
Delegation:	Art Cowie
Staff:	Joanne Baxter, Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: None

- **Panel's Consensus:** It was suggested by Mr. Francl and it was the consensus of the Panel to adjourn this item for two weeks until the applicant has a registered architect on the project, or it is confirmed that a registered architect is not required for the project. It was further agreed that the Panel would start at 3:30 on September 27, 2006 in order to hear this application.
- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cowie agreed that he could have a registered architect on the project if required and that he could return in two weeks.

3. Address:	1695 Main Street
DE:	Rezoning
Use:	Return following unanimous non-support on April 26, 2006 - this is one of the SEFC cost recovery private land applications
Zoning:	M-2 to CD-1
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	John Clark, CDA Architects
Review:	First
Delegation:	John Clark, Ritti Suvkaisunthorn
Staff:	Grant Miller and Mary Beth Rondeau

EVALUATION: (SUPPORT 9-0)

- **Introduction:** Grant Miller, Project Planner, referring to the context model, revisited some of the Panel's comments from the UDP meeting of April 26, 2006. He noted that the density has stayed the same with an FSR at 3.5 which is consistent with the ODP. The Panel had supported the tower location and the streetcar and bike way. The live work units have been removed and the building is essentially residential with some retail on Main Street.

Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner asked the Panel to comment on the shoulder massing on Quebec Street.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** John Clark, Architect went through the changes that have been made to the project since the last Urban Design Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus:**
 - the four storey shoulder massing along Quebec Street was supported by the Panel; and
 - the public realm could be strengthened and should be integrated into the buildings site planning.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application and felt that the scheme has been greatly improved over the last presentation with a lot of bold moves taken. They commended the architect and the landscape architect for the efforts in responding to the Panel previous comments.

The massing reads reasonably well although it still feels tight for the site. This is in part due to the narrow geometry of the site. The Panel felt the four levels of the massing are stepping well and are well developed on all four sides. The tower massing seems to have the broader face next to the broad face of the building to the north and the Panel suggested it could be flipped giving a better relationship to its neighbour.

One member suggested that the tower form is too large and that more density could be added to the middle building. Two to three story townhouses on the lane could be added with a tight courtyard and individual townhouses on the street. The Panel agree with Staff to support the shoulder on Quebec going to four floors.

There were some concerns about the open space around the building and it was felt that more of it has migrated to the south. The Panel still question the amount on the north side.

The lobby amenity and breeze way work well together and that it will be an animated space. The east side entry has a stronger identity but the Panel felt it could be opened up a bit.

One Panel member encouraged the applicant to look at natural daylight in the corridors maybe by using light tubes.

The Panel felt the public realm could be developed further. One member suggested using aspects of the local heritage found in the area to inform the design of the building and the landscape. It was also suggested that materials selected should contribute to a grittier building with a more industrial character reminiscent of the heritage of the neighbourhood.

The Panel felt it was a positive move to add green roofs throughout the development, although it was felt that the design of the residential tower could be further improved.

One Panel member would like to see tree grates that are over scale with perhaps a wrought iron fence on the lane.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Clark thanked the Panel for their comments and expressed appreciation for the recognition of the efforts made to respond to the earlier concerns.

4. Address:	SEFC Parcel 9
DE:	Workshop
Use:	Massing/FSR reduction, streetwall/edge/ground floor/public realm interface, character and expression as it relates to sustainability
Application Status:	Complete
Architect:	Millennium/Merrick, Stu Lyon, Robert Stern, Larry Doyle
Owner:	Ranjit Dharni
Review:	First
Delegation:	Stu Lyon, Roger Bayley, Paul Merrick
Staff:	Scot Hein and Karis Hiebert

EVALUATION: WORKSHOP (NO VOTE)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner introduced this applicant and reminded the Panel that this is the 4th and final workshop for SEFC sub-area 2A in advance of at least eight related development permit applications to be brought back for voting. These development permits will be considered by either the Development Permit Board or the Director of Planning. Staff would anticipate the need to achieve a supportive Urban Design Panel vote for each development permit prior to taking forward for approval.

Advice was sought from the Panel on two specific aspects of the current work with both relating to character:

- 1) The applicant's general architectural response to character and expression given design development conditions (Appendix B #'s 2, 6, 15) and;
- 2) The applicant's more specific response to individual street character with respect to building face/private setback and public realm interface/transition/integration given design development conditions (Appendix B #'s 5, 16, 17) focusing on streets with residential uses at grade.

In addition to the draft rezoning conditions the Panel received a copy of the Council approved Policy Statement of October 1999 and the Design Considerations document. Absent of design guidelines, these documents continue to inform the collective understanding of the intended ethics, principles and notionally, character, intended for the entire SEFC development, including sub-area 2A.

The Panel, in previous workshop advice, had already highlighted the challenges of delivering such a large singular development in such a short timeframe. In fact, it is because of this challenge that Staff have opted not to seek Council endorsement of design guidelines, but rather put some faith in a strategy that allows more individual, creative design responses. Staff also believe that there still needs to be clarity about how each site will contribute to a larger, coherent idea with rigour. What is that larger idea was the key question that was asked of the Panel.

Staff's take on this larger idea starts with buildings that are generally rectilinear, with a strong streetwall interface, noting some special waterfront opportunities for sites 4, 8 and 11. This approach is already well reflected in the rezoning submission plan.

Secondly, at the development permit stage, Mr. Hein reported that Staff will be seeking buildings that are:

- 1) well ordered with legible uses and entries;
- 2) properly scaled for the site location and adjacencies;
- 3) well proportioned in both massing expression as well as fenestration, specifically recognizing that each facade should provide the proper response to solar exposure. For 2A, we are fortunate to have a circumstance where views are oriented north; and
- 4) of high quality in their materiality, detailing and execution.

Staff believe that through the work at the development permit stage, and the commitment to do high quality, well executed buildings, that the above will be achieved.

Noticing the policy statement and design considerations document, Staff is seeking buildings that promote sustainability in their architectural response:

- 1) by clearly and overtly distinguishing between solar aspects;
- 2) by emphasizing and integrating special features that relate to on-site water storage, cross ventilation performance, such as wind and other energy related systems or structures;
- 3) by clearly announcing occupant interior movement where possible, especially at corners for single-loaded buildings, as an expression of social interaction while enhancing CPTED performance for the external environment (the idea of clustering, while still separating, residential and commercial entries, including stairs and elevators at prominent corners, was an idea at the CHMC kick-off sustainability workshop that started the design process for 2A). There are new opportunities to be exploited on this approach at the development permit stage given the building typologies sought in the re-zoning submission;
- 4) by honestly expressing their uses, activities and environmental performance requirements in a way that looks forward with respect to building systems, materials and detailing;
- 5) by both educating, and by creating opportunities for the transfer of sustainability principles and performance to other sites within South East False Creek and throughout the balance of the city and region; and
- 6) most importantly, being true to place, recognizing that the qualities that characterize Vancouver's west coast architecture, specifically our tradition of responding to special light, view and landscape opportunities, is an approach to character that lends itself to the expression of environmental performance requirements sought for the South East False Creek buildings.

The architectural strategy for individual buildings is clearly an important urban design question, given the scale, location, prominence, and delivery strategy under the auspices of a single developer. Staff recognize however, that while aspiring to design excellence, each building has a role to play in contributing to overall character. Therefore there might be a hierarchy of site locations that contribute in different ways.

The first "bookend" buildings will establish context for future adjoining sub-area edges with each park interface presenting special design opportunities.

The character of the four buildings that adjoin the central plaza and Salt Building as also important to consider as an ensemble as they will work together to provide proper scale and interface to the village heart.

The three waterfront sites (4, 8 and 11) may present special opportunities to introduce bold architecture that helps invigorate the immediate waterfront edge as well as the east end of False Creek.

The mid-block east-west buildings might be considered as supporting cast members that, while very good in their own right, have a primary role in establishing and reinforcing both street and precinct character.

Mr. Hein closed by noting that the re-zoning provides special passive design FSR exclusions that are intended to not only encourage green performance of buildings, but also be noticed in the architectural response as an outward expression of best practices for this experimental public benefit. Staff believe that the design responses for 2A could positively inform how we generally regulate environmentally responsible development throughout the city in the future. Staff will therefore be looking carefully at these first buildings with respect to how these exclusions are earned and expressed. Mr. Hein also noted that all 2A buildings will enjoy additional floor area, above that prescribed under the ODP, for achieving LEED Gold. Staff again believe it is important to notice green performance in the architectural response for these special floor area benefits.

Staff will continue to seek well conceived and executed buildings that contribute in their own way to a coherent, yet visually complex, overall character. The approach to regulation, without design guidelines, but with a clear understanding of the appropriate place-making strategy, will open the door for individual design responses that are creative and varied while disciplined and rigorous with respect to the larger idea. The Panel's advice comes at a critical moment as development permit submissions are being prepared with the first applications back before the Panel within months. The Panel's advice is equally important for Staff and the development team to help us all understand how to approach the site.

Mr. Hein stated that the design team would take the Panel through the materials in response to the two character questions he noted. Mr. Hein then took questions from the Panel.

Mr. Hein asked Tom Osdoba, Manager Sustainability to speak on the areas of sustainability. He noted that there are three areas where there are opportunities to express sustainability - building materials, energy and food.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Roger Bayley, described the sustainability plans for the site and that they have moved to LEED Gold. Paul Merrick, Architect, described the character of the buildings, particularly the orientation and design plans for the area around the Salt Building.
- **Panel's Consensus:**
 - The panel agreed that this is an enormous undertaking in a short period of time;
 - The Panel, in reviewing the material, felt that the guiding streetscape and urban design principals for the project were not yet clearly shown and could therefore not be commented on;
 - The proposed development should be true to its place both historically and geographically; and
 - The sustainable design goals of the applicant team should be apparent in the architectural and urban design character of the development.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel acknowledged that this project is an enormous undertaking considering the scope and time constraints.

Several Panel members suggested that the applicant team should clarify the urban design and sustainability objectives for the project site, so that the merits of each development permit can be discussed in relation to the stated goals. The character of the east-west and north-south streetscapes needs clarification. Each development permit application could respond and elaborate on the initial stated objectives.

One Panel member commented that much of the recent planning work in the neighbourhood had revolved around sustainable design and that the buildings could be designed and marketed from the point of view of the core issue of sustainability contemporary design.

One Panel member suggested a design response that celebrated the mountains, forests and ocean using building materials that are natural to our area. The site should recognise where we live using rain protection and light protection.

The streetcar proposed on 1st Avenue would have a strong influence on the character of the area and should be celebrated.

One Panel member commented that the permeability of the site in the North South direction for pedestrian users was particularly important. The initial planning for the project has always shown multiple paths, through and around sites, down to the water. This should not be lost in the further development of the sites. The differentiation of the street character for the north-south versus the east-west streets should also be clarified.

One Panel member observed that the earlier planning documents, assembled over the past few years with input from the community, contained most of the urban design and heritage related guidelines necessary to inform the design process going forward. The applicant could review this material and develop a response based on this earlier work.

The Panel agreed that being true to place is the key to this development. Best to recognise the essential qualities of this waterfront location and respond in an authentic way that celebrates the unique qualities of heritage and site.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the Panel for their remarks. Paul Merrick said they are continuing to explore the character of the buildings and they will be an expression of sustainable and urban design principles. Roger Bayley noted that they are planning on bringing concrete to the site in March or April and they have eight parcels to design. The construction deadlines for the project are very onerous.

Stu Lyon asked if the Panel would be interested in having the team come back with each building to review before they come back with their complete application. In discussion with the applicants the Panel agreed to arrange a three hour workshop session outside the regular panel meeting dates, at the Applicants offices. Mr. Hein agreed to liaise with the Panel and the applicant team to find a date.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55PM.