

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 14, 2005
TIME: 4.00 pm
PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall
PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Alan Endall, Chair
Nigel Baldwin
Robert Barnes
Shahla Bozorgzadeh
James Cheng
Marta Farevaag
Ronald Lea
Peter Wreglesworth
C.C. Yao

REGRETS: Margot Long
Edward Smith

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Debbie Kempton

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	2828 Main Street
2.	Other Business

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Endall called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m.

1. Address: 2828 Main Street
DE: 409546
Use: Mixed (3-storeys, 41 units)
Zoning: C-2C
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Creekside
Owner: Holborn Development (2812 Main St.) Ltd.
Review: First
Delegation: Ken Falk, Peter Kruek
Staff: James Boldt for Bob Adair

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** James Boldt, Planner, introduced this application. Mr. Boldt noted that this is an unusual site bounded by three streets: Main Street to the west, East 12th Avenue to the north and Watson Street to the east. Mr. Boldt stated that a number of development applications have been approved between 12th Avenue and Broadway which have residential frontage at grade on Watson Street.

Mr. Boldt noted the challenges of this site that is both shallow and wide with a 4 ft. drop from Watson Street to Main Street. The applicant is seeking a height relaxation from the outright allowable height of 35 ft. to approximately 43 ft. partly to accommodate the crossfall of the site and also to keep the townhouse entries slightly above the level of Watson Street, while allowing clearance for the parking ramp access. Additionally, the extra height would be beneficial in order to get adequate retail height along Main Street and also to better reflect the overall height proportions of the traditional Main Street commercial buildings further to the north. Staff would support an appeal to the Board of Variance for the additional height, subject to achieving a high level of urban design and architectural quality. The proposed FSR for this project is 2.88, which is under the allowable 3.0 FSR maximum.

Mr. Boldt said that this is a highly visible site at a major intersection and the reinforcing of a strong Main Street character and the creation of strong retail at grade are critical goals in this neighbourhood. The improvement of the character of Watson Street, by providing residential units at grade, is seen as a good opportunity on this site.

This proposal would see the Main Street and East 12th Avenue frontages developed with retail at grade and 3 storeys of residential above with the principal residential entry off of Main Street. Parking and loading access would be provided from Watson Street. Watson Street would also have one and a half storey townhouses which would be accessible from both the street and internally. The proposed exterior cladding is primarily brick.

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

- whether the proposal has earned the extra height requested, within the context of the overall quality of the application. The Panel was asked to indicate whether it would support the additional height, and under what conditions if any.

- comments on the proposed Main Street façade treatment in terms of its streetscape character, proportions, articulation and approach to detailing.
 - comments on the proposed Main Street façade in terms of expression of the retail base, architectural treatment and its proportions, including its height relative to the residential floors above.
 - comments regarding the proposed Watson Street façade in terms of suggestions for detail improvements.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Ken Falk, Creekside Architecture, described the design rationale and Peter Kruek, the Landscape Architect reviewed the landscape plan. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development is recommended to:
 - more clearly and deliberately resolve the massing, articulation and character of the elevations, perhaps with conceptual references to historical or contextual precedents in the area, in order to merit the additional height requested;
 - simplify the design such that the Main Street and 12th Avenue facades more clearly reinforce the overall massing of the building;
 - refinement of the street level retail expression to give it a stronger definition and to differentiate it from the residential levels above;
 - Consideration should be given to relocating the residential exits off of Main Street in order to allow for continuous storefront retail;
 - Add street trees on Main Street;
 - Consideration should be given to maximizing roof top access and adding landscaping.
 - **Related Commentary:**

The Panel did not support this application. The Panel did not have an issue with the extra height requested per se, the issue was that the extra height was not earned through strong urban design. Several panel members commented on the lack of consistency in the architectural resolution and details of the Main Street and 12th Avenue elevations and agreed that the Watson Street façade is the most successful part of this application.

Several Panel members suggested adding landscaping outside of the roof top amenity space and making the amenity accessible by elevator. One Panel member would like to see larger porches in the proposal.

It was mentioned by a Panel member that continuous weather protection is key for the Main Street pedestrian experience.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Falk acknowledged that the Main Street and 12th Avenue façade designs could be revisited. He noted that he felt torn between the Planning Departments requests and the conflicting suggestions from the Panel.

2. Other Business

There was a discussion amongst the Panel members regarding applications that come before the Panel and are supportable except for one issue. In the past there has been discussion about making on the spot amendments and taking a second vote on the amendment. The concern with that process is that the amendment would have to be very clear and concise so that the Panel knew exactly what they were voting on.

The following suggestions were made:

- Vote non-support but note in the minutes unanimous support for certain aspects or improvements;
- Vote support noting the main issues that need to be addressed and these issues will generally make their way into the Prior-To conditions.

A Panel member noted that good projects should not get delayed over small issues. It was also noted that a project would not get support if it had many poor design issues that needed to be addressed.

A Panel member stated that the issue of voting depends on whether the Panel wants to see the project again or not. In the past, Panel members have supported a preliminary application knowing that they will see it again at the complete stage.

On the other hand, a Panel member said that a vote of non-support can be helpful for an architect that has been pressured to follow a specific design. Often the project will come back as a much better building after the first vote of non-support.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.