

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 15, 2004

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Bruce Haden, Chair
Larry Adams
Robert Barnes
Jeffrey Corbett
Marta Farevaag
Ronald Lea
Margot Long
Jennifer Marshall
Brian Martin

REGRETS: Alan Endall
Steven Keyes
Mark Ostry

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	538 Smithe Street (905 Richards)
2.	1961 Collingwood
3.	2330/72 Kingsway ("Eldorado Hotel")

1.	Address:	538 Smithe Street (905 Richards)
	DA:	408385
	Use:	Residential Live Work (7 storeys)
	Zoning:	DD
	Application Status:	Complete
	Architect:	F. Adab
	Owner:	Nijaf Enterprises
	Review:	Second
	Delegation:	Bill Harrison, Fred Adab
	Staff:	Mike Kemble

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Mike Kemble, Development Planner, presented this application for the site at the corner of Richards and Smithe Streets. The Panel did not support the proposal when it was reviewed in May 2004. The Panel's main concerns related to the massing and the façade treatment, particularly on Smithe Street, and the quality of the private open space.

The principal entrance to the residential is on Smithe Street, which is supported by staff. There are also individual townhouse entries along both streets. The application complies with the Downtown South 12 ft. setback requirement on both Smithe and Richards Streets. The proposal is for a seven-storey building with Ariscraft-stone facing on the lower storeys, with a roof deck and an interior courtyard at the rear which includes a small children's play area. There are 12 townhouse units.

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

- the exterior façade design and massing;
 - lane and corner treatment;
 - public realm interface including the townhouse entries;
 - private open space including roof treatment and courtyard.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Bill Harrison, Landscape Architect, briefly described the revised landscape plan and the public realm, and Fred Adab, Architect, reviewed the design rationale. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
 - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Simplify the façade treatment and give consideration to increasing repetition of typical elevation conditions and tying material treatment more closely to overall massing;
 - Increase vertical greenery especially at blank walls;
 - Design development to improve the play area including consideration of planter consolidation, increasing openings to the lane and opportunities for overlook to the lane and screening of the parking;
 - Design development to the Richards/Smithe corner at grade including consideration for deletion of the water feature in favour of seating and/or public art.
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- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this submission and found the project much improved since the last review. Major improvements were noted to the Smithe and Richards Streets facades, as well as to the massing, particularly at the entry on Smithe Street.

With respect to the façade treatment, there was a recommendation for further simplification by increasing the repetitive elements and taking greater care in how the material treatment is attached to the logic of the massing. The façade is currently still too “busy” and confusing. The entry canopy was seen as a significant improvement over what was proposed previously: it is much lighter and more graceful. One Panel member found the curved roof on the amenity building to be superfluous; although another thought it improved the overlook.

The Panel found the public realm interface considerably improved. It was noted that the entry stairs are not quite centred on the doorways, on both streets, making it look unbalanced. It was suggested the stairs might be widened. The Panel found the water feature at the corner to be somewhat weak and not well integrated into the building. While it was appreciated as a public gesture, the Panel thought it would be better to eliminate it in favour of public seating. Consideration for public art at the corner was also recommended, as well as a different paving material. There was also a suggestion to remove the tree on the corner which makes it look too private.

Some concerns were expressed about the size of the front patios, although it was acknowledged it is likely not possible to make them any bigger. The Panel supported the double row of trees to create a strong streetscape. However, it was noted that in some cases the trees are not completely paired. Some Panel members also questioned whether the very narrow strips of lawn might better be replaced with low ground cover.

Further design development to the lane was recommended. Suggestions included more vertical landscape on the blank wall and/or adding a punched window into the end unit or adding a clerestory window. In general, more landscaping in the lane was recommended.

With respect to the amenity space, there was a recommendation to include a seating area next to the play space. Consolidation of the smaller planters was also recommended. One larger planter would be easier for long term maintenance and it could also reinforce the form of the play area. Another recommendation was to provide some screening from the parking. There was also a recommendation for the actual play space to be stepped up to overlook the lane rather than being all at one level.

The Panel strongly supported the rooftop amenity space, both for the benefit of the residents as well as for overlook from neighbouring buildings. The inclusion of garden plots was commended. There was a suggestion to increase the amount of greenery on the roof and to generally make it more inviting. The applicant was cautioned to carefully consider the integration of the mechanical equipment and the effect it may have on the layout of the amenity area.

- **Applicant’s Response:** Mr. Harrison thought the Panel had made some very good comments on the landscaping which he said he agreed with, especially the opening of the lane. He agreed some grille work would be a good idea and some vertical greenery can be added at each corner. He also supported the consolidation of the planters. Mr. Harrison said he would also support public art at the corner, noting the water feature was intended more as a noise buffer.

2.	Address:	1961 Collingwood
	DA:	408630
	Use:	Mixed
	Zoning:	C-2
	Application Status:	Complete
	Architect:	W.T. Leung
	Owner:	Larc Investments (Collingwood Ltd.)
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Jane Durante, Wing Ting Leung, Konning Tam
	Staff:	Bob Adair

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)

- **Introduction:** Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application in a C-2 zone at the corner of Collingwood and West 4th Avenue. The site is about 200 ft. x 113 ft. He briefly described the neighbouring context. The proposal is for a four-storey development with one storey of commercial use at grade and three storeys of residential above. Underground parking is accessed from the lane. The commercial component was originally designed with the intent of a single tenant but this may change. The residential component is primarily in townhouse forms accessed from a courtyard at the second level with access to the street and parking by an elevator at the corner and an exterior stair. There are also three additional townhouses having access from grade on Collingwood Street. Proposed materials are a combination of brick and *Ariscraft* on the main elevation with metal panel and glass at the top floor. There are also areas of painted concrete at the lane and Collingwood elevations. Proposed density is 2.16 FSR, below the maximum permitted 2.5 FSR.

Staff are very supportive of the proposed townhouse units, particularly those on Collingwood Street. The advice of the Panel is sought in the following areas:

- whether there is sufficient articulation in the massing and detailing on the West 4th Avenue elevation, noting it is 200 ft. in length;
 - design potential of the corner courtyard, noting it functions as the residential entry;
 - impact of the single level commercial space on West 4th Avenue;
 - general comments on materials and detailing.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Wing Leung, Architect, explained the project was originally conceived as a series of multiple retail units but there is now a strong possibility there could be a single tenant, possibly a grocery store or pharmacy, either of which would include a coffee shop. These large anchor tenants require a 13 ft. 1 in. clear floor to ceiling height. Mr. Leung said their preference, however, is for a series of retail shops, also including a coffee shop, with a 5,000 sq.ft. greengrocer at the corner. If the latter is successful, the ground floor plane will be stepped along West 4th Avenue, taking into account the drop in elevation. Following Mr. Leung's description of the design rationale the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to the upper face of the 4th Avenue to decrease the prominence of the central entry inset in favour of more a diversified, rhythmic façade. Preference for multiple tenants but the building could survive a single tenancy if the façade is variegated and transparent;
 - Design development to the corner courtyard to maximize variety of uses and interactive use providing for both movement and seating;
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- Design development to the courtyard to provide visual termination at ends and more variety in the intermediate locations;
- Design development of the lane to increase planting, visual interest and permeability and decrease the apparent scale of the concrete wall.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel generally found this to be a handsome scheme. The Panel particularly liked the arrangement of the townhouses and thought the unit layouts would work well. The townhouse units on Collingwood were strongly supported.

Most of the Panel's comments related to the 4th Avenue façade and the scale of the 200 ft. frontage. Most Panel members would prefer to see a series of smaller retail units rather than one large retailer, but thought a single tenancy could be equally successful if carefully treated. It was noted that the centralized entry on 4th Avenue is exacerbating its monolithic appearance and the scale of this break gives too much to the retail expression. As well, the central entryway only makes sense if there is a single tenant. It was stressed that if the space is occupied by a single tenant it should be designed in such a way that it can be easily converted for use by smaller tenancies at a later date. Panel members generally recommended greater variety along this frontage, including street furniture and other embellishments to improve the streetscape. The Panel also stressed the importance of signage and the need for incoming tenants to work with the building.

The Panel recommended design development to the lane and to do as much as possible to humanize its scale. Suggestions included adding windows and vertical planting to the rear wall, and open grilles to the parking ramp and generally making the lane a more positive experience for neighbouring residents and passing pedestrians.

There were some concerns about the central courtyard and it was noted it could change according to the nature of the tenants on the ground floor. Suggestions for the courtyard included incorporating some raised edges and providing informal seating in the corner. There was also a recommendation to scale down the tree to something different than all the others on Collingwood. There were concerns that the courtyard seems too linear and needs to be broken up more.

Other comments included:

- the outdoor amenity at the east corner will not be well used; it is left over space and very shady;
- the relationship of Townhouse 4 to the elevator should be reconsidered;
- concern about the very small size of the residential lobby;
- the projected bay in the centre of West 4th is too small;
- the bicycle racks seem to be in the wrong place;
- there is potential to lower the common courtyard and open the corner of the building, which would relieve the totalitarianism of the lane and bring in landscape and overlook.

Some Panel members found it very difficult to comment on the scheme because of the uncertainty about the ground floor use which could alter the façade and the public realm.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Leung acknowledged the comments about the need for a finer grain on West 4th Avenue. He also agreed with the importance of signage on this building. With respect to the corner treatment, Mr. Leung said if they have multiple tenants it will be possible to lower the courtyard. Ms. Durante assured the Panel the landscape will reflect that this is an elegant building.

3.	Address:	2330/72 Kingsway ("Eldorado Hotel")
	Use:	Mixed (14 & 18 storeys)
	Zoning:	CD-1
	Application Status:	Rezoning
	Architect:	Tim Ankenman
	Owner:	Eldorado Management Group Ltd.
	Review:	First
	Delegation:	Tim Ankenman, Thomas Gould, Peter Kruek
	Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this rezoning application to redevelop two sites from C-2 and RS-1 to CD-1 for a mixed use development including commercial and residential uses on the north site and residential and a daycare on the south site. The combined sites total two acres, bridging across a City-owned lane. This proposal can be considered under the recently completed Renfrew Collingwood community vision which supports new needed commercial and/or residential uses on this site. It also supports a mixed use development including a supermarket if adequate parking is provided. This proposal includes a supermarket on the Kingsway frontage. There has been considerable public consultation in which it emerged there is support for tower forms.

The proposal replaces the existing 535-seat pub with a 60-seat pub and includes a small beer and wine store. At the Knight and Kingsway corner an 18-storey residential tower is proposed. To the east on the Kingsway frontage is a 28,000 sq.ft. supermarket with two storeys of residential above, and a 15-storey tower on the site across the lane. Total density over the two sites is about 3.87 FSR. The public benefits offered by this project are the day care and the food service store. Following a description of the project, Mr. Hein noted the areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought:

- appropriateness and compatibility of the uses;
 - whether the site can accommodate the bonus density arising from the daycare amenity;
 - appropriateness of the two tower approach;
 - appropriateness of the general site planning and circulation.
- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Tim Ankenman, Architect, presented his design rationale and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Analyse and review auto and truck traffic to ensure enhancement and interest without conflicting with the pedestrian uses of the plaza;
 - Consider relocation or addition of parkade access to the street;
 - Implement sustainable design strategy;
 - Consider relocation of density from the south tower and 30th Avenue townhouses to the Kingsway tower and frontages;
 - Enhance CRU frontage on Kingsway;
 - Reconsider the arrangement of the townhouses on the southeast corner;
 - Support for special paving treatment in the lane;
 - It would be appropriate to go to a slightly different form of development in the Nanaimo tower; a taller tower on the corner and a more compact and slab building on Nanaimo;

- Because of the isolation of the Kingsway tower it calls for a high level of architectural quality; it will be a landmark in the city.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel generally found this to be an ambitious and interesting scheme. The density was strongly supported, as was the proposed mix of uses.

The Panel had no concerns about the compatibility of the uses on the site and noted they are a reflection of what the community wants. The Panel strongly supported the daycare and grocery store uses and thought they were good contributors towards earning the increased density on this site. The compatibility of the daycare and the pub was not an issue, noting they do not share the same hours of activity. In terms of earning its density, however, there was a recommendation that for a development for this scale and size, sustainability measures should also be given serious consideration as a public benefit of the rezoning.

Most of the Panel's concerns related to the circulation on the site and the activities in the lane. The Panel liked the use of the lane in this scheme. One Panel member suggested it should be less direct, possibly creating even greater confusion between cars and pedestrians (similar to Granville Island). The Panel cautioned that there is a danger of the engineering infrastructure (supermarket loading, fire access, etc.) overwhelming this project. In this respect, the applicant was strongly urged to undertake a comprehensive traffic study, particularly with respect to the servicing aspects of the supermarket including sizes of delivery vehicles, turning radii and delivery times. The importance of working with traffic engineers early in the scheme was strongly emphasized in order to be assured of creating a different experience in the lane.

The Panel had some concerns about the parking access and it was strongly suggested that a large supermarket needs something other than lane access. It may also be counter to what is trying to be achieved for this lane in terms of its pedestrian nature. Noting that Nanaimo is not a very pedestrian street, it was suggested there may be a way to provide a second access off Nanaimo, which would ease traffic in the lane and improve the likelihood of it becoming a successful shared vehicular/pedestrian zone. There was also a recommendation to consider different hierarchies for the north-south and east-west lanes. The Panel also stressed that the quality of materials in this pedestrian realm should be at the highest level. The use of special paving in the lane was unanimously supported.

A Panel member questioned whether the wine bar should flow through to Nanaimo Street rather than being completely isolated on the lane; also, whether the towers should have more presence in the lane, possibly having a direct connection with a small lobby at the rear to provide more eyes on the lane.

The 12 ft. grade difference on the Kingsway frontage was recognized as being difficult to deal with, but the Panel thought it needed more than one retail unit to make it a vibrant street.

The Panel agreed that a two tower scheme makes sense on this site. It was, however, strongly suggested that the Kingsway tower could be taller in response to its location on a major arterial and relative isolation, and the Nanaimo tower could be lower in response to the neighbouring low density residential neighbourhood. A high level of architectural quality was recommended for the Kingsway tower in particular because of its prominence.

The inclusion of outdoor amenities on the lower roof levels of the towers was strongly recommended.

In general the Panel was very supportive of the proposal but suggested the applicant needed to push it a bit further to really demonstrate that all the uses can interact and work together successfully.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Ankenman responded to some of the Panel's comments:
 - there is a large lower level outdoor space that comes off the amenity room;
 - they will look at programming more outdoor amenity space in the southern tower;
 - truck access to the supermarket is being reviewed; the proposed operator is now using smaller trucks; the hours will be restricted;
 - a sustainability approach is being considered but they do not want to commit to a LEED standard but they have taken a first step in trying to program the site so there is less dependence on the use of cars;
 - a lane management study will be done;
 - they are negotiating with Engineering to introduce special paving in the lane.