

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 17, 2003

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Stuart Lyon, Chair
Helen Besharat (present for Items 1 - 3 only)
Jeffrey Corbett (present for Items 2 - 5 only)
Bruce Haden
Reena Lazar (present for Items 1 - 2 only)
Brian Martin (excused Item 3)
Kim Perry
Sorin Tatomir (present for Items 1 - 2 only)
Ken Terriss
Mark Ostry
Jennifer Marshall
Eva Lee

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	111 Alexander Street
2.	189 National Avenue
3.	301 Kingsway
4.	5380 Oben Street
5.	57 Lakewood Drive

Business

The Panel briefly discussed the September 4, 2003 meeting at which 550 Bute Street was reviewed with guest panelists. Some Panel members voiced concerns with the procedure for reviewing high buildings, suggesting the Panel's input should occur much earlier in the process, possibly in a workshop. Concerns were also expressed with the adequacy of the 550 Bute Street submission for a complete application.

Jennifer Marshall agreed to draft a memo to the Planning Department, outlining the Panel's concerns and offering suggestions for improving the process for reviewing high buildings. This will be reviewed at the next Panel meeting on October 1, 2003.

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1. Address: 111 Alexander Street
DA: 407706
Use: Pump Station
Zoning: HA-2
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Greater Vancouver Regional District
Owner: City of Vancouver
Review: First
Delegation: Sean Smith, Don Brynildsen
Staff: Scot Hein
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EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (3-7)

Introduction: Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this complete application in the HA-2 zone in Gastown. The application is for an upgraded Columbia Sewage Pump Station and is a relatively small building in a mid-block location at the foot of Columbia Street and adjacent to the CPR yard. The site is also at the termination of the future CPR public pedestrian right-of-way connecting International Village and Gastown. Mr. Hein briefly reviewed the site context, including the Four Sisters Housing Co-op directly opposite.

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

- whether the proposal is an appropriate response given the prevailing context;
- CPTED performance, noting the lack of glazing on the ground plane.

The project has been reviewed by the Gastown Historical Area Planning Committee. GHAPC supported the overall design and landscaping and recommended design development with respect to the proposed glass block medallions.

Applicant's Opening Comments: Sean Smyth, Project Manager, GVRD, briefly described the operations of the pump station and noted the pump station that has existed in this location since 1973 now requires upgrading. The largest benefit of the new pump station will be a big reduction in sewage overflows into the harbour.

Don Brynildsen, Assistant City Engineer, explained the City of Vancouver owns the site and the proposed upgraded facility will be beneficial to the City. CP Rail was approached to determine if the station could be located on its property but these negotiations were not successful. Mr. Smyth noted that concerns have been raised by residents of the Four Sisters Co-op who are concerned about loss of views and noise from construction activity.

The applicant team responded to the Panel's questions.

Panel's Comments: The Panel appreciated the opportunity to review this project; however, it did not support the application.

The Panel thought this building should be honest and simple particularly given its location at the terminus of an important public right of way. There were concerns expressed about the building's expression. The Panel thought it could still be contextually sound without including glass medallions and providing references to cornices which Panel members found superfluous. It was recommended that the stairs at the end could be opened up. The use of brick is acceptable.

A number of Panel members commented that the public may find the city's sewage system very interesting and for this reason strongly recommended that the internal operations be opened up in some way so that people walking by can get some idea of what is happening inside. It was thought that much more could be done with glass in the building to provide more visual permeability. The inclusion of signage and information on the building was also strongly recommended. It was suggested the building be named and the name incorporated into the fabric of the building in some way. The inclusion of an educational component, explaining how the city's sewage system works, was recommended by several Panel members. Another suggestion was to incorporate a display wall for local art.

With respect to the ground plane, the Panel strongly recommended the retention of benches in the plaza. Concerns were expressed about not providing public amenities because of apprehensions about them being used. There was a strong recommendation from several Panel members to remove the low level planting because it will be very difficult to maintain in this environment. However, it was thought more could be done with street trees on the Alexander Street to help break up the façade on this frontage. It was also recommended that the fence be extended to the building to the west.

Several Panel members thought it was a lost opportunity not to provide something modern and funky on this site, perhaps something less Gastown and more industrial. A comment was made that the building looks like a box with decorative elements.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Bryndilsen noted the initial design of the building was much more utilitarian and the current scheme is the result of input from various interest groups. He agreed a public education feature would be a positive addition that could be considered. However, at this stage in the process it would be very difficult to completely redesign the building. He thanked the Panel for its comments. With respect to the suggestions to expose the inner workings of the building, Mr. Smyth noted that all of the more interesting equipment is below grade at the rear. The top levels contain mostly electrical equipment, housed in large cabinets. With respect to landscaping, Mr. Smyth said it would be the GVRD's preference to minimize it, noting that most attempts to install landscaping in the area have failed. Local residents are not in favour of benches in the area. As well, the small plaza will contain utility access which would also limit the use of benches.

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2. Address: 189 National Avenue (CityGate)
DA: 407740
Use: Mixed (14 storeys, 77 units)
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Perkins & Co.
Owner: Bosa Development Corp.
Review: First
Delegation: Eric Martin, Larry Diamond, John Perkins Jr.
Staff: Scot Hein
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-5)

Introduction: Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this complete application which is the final phase of the CityGate development. The proposal is for a 14-storey building containing 77 market housing units and some ground level CRUs fronting Main Street. After reviewing the site context, Mr. Hein noted the following areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought:

- architectural form and expression as well as the podium given the prevailing CityGate context;
- podium expression, including the use and extent of the brick;
- tower expression - advice on form, exterior expression, particularly the upper two storeys;
- public realm treatment, particularly on National Avenue.

Applicant's Opening Comments: John Perkins, Jr., Architect, presented the design rationale and briefly reviewed the drawings. Larry Diamond described the landscape plan and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel's Comments: The Panel supported this application and recommended design development in a number of areas. Comments and suggestions were as follows:

Height

- it is unfortunate that the height is limited but understand the reasons - wish it could have been taller and slimmer;
- with respect to the massing, taller would be better;
- for the sake of efficiency it would be better to have this tower a little bit higher with a smaller floorplate;

Colour Palette

- carrying on the same colour brick from the rest of CityGate may not be justifiable; maybe you should change the colour scheme completely;
- suggest a dark colour brick.

Residential Entry

- the entry is obscure;
- the residential entrance is anonymous and hidden behind the arcade;
- there is no indication that there is a front door;
- the design could be improved with some kind expression of the residential entry;
- the entrance to this building is lacking and should have more of a sense of arrival.

Tower

- commend the applicant for the departure from the language of the rest of CityGate which is very positive at this stage;
- the tower is very self referential;
- the tower appears stocky and lacking in vertical expression;
- preference for the building form to be more in keeping with the rest of CityGate;
- commend the applicant for the departure of architectural expression - support that this is very different from the rest of CityGate;
- the building could be pushed in a little at that two-bay connection, maybe drop out the frames on top;
- I find the frame somewhat artificial, providing a lot of unnecessary shading on the patio space (extra cost and no public benefit);
- suggest either putting some suites behind the frame or eliminating it;
- the choice of material is right but detailing of the canopy, the brick layers and the cornice line will need to have the right detailing to make it work;
- the upper two storeys need design development;
- the rooftop needs design development; e.g., the solid part of the top of the building is too narrow;
- there is a problem with the proportion of vertical and horizontal solids that is not working at the moment;
- the concrete needs design development to express the reveals. Also, the vents through the slab need to be carefully chosen, possibly providing eyebrow details;
- the corner fireplaces need to be worked into the elevations;
- it is unfortunate that the amenity space is not in place of the suite on the west side where it looks into the open space and will get more benefit from the light. Although a suite on Main Street would be less valuable the amenity space in this location would benefit all the residents of the building;
- perhaps the element below the upper two floors could be a local material (possibly wood);
- the glass and the horizontal bands on the tower do not provide the strength and robustness required in this part of Main Street.

Base and Tower/Podium relationship:

- the base is not resolved in its relationship to the tower. I don't think it needs to be continuous to the existing building to the north;
- there is a disconnect between the base and the tower;
- there may be opportunity around the entrance to the tower to bring the two elements together.
- the relationship of the podium and tower together seems quite awkward;
- the base reads like a false façade;
- the two different expressions between the podium and tower are somewhat disconnected; some of the units on the third and fourth floor do not engage the podium as well as they could;
- the connection between the podium and the tower should be reconsidered to add more weight to the bottom than it appears now;
- reconsider the connection to the ground base and the proportion of the tower;
- my concern about the tower/podium connection is where it hits the corner of National and Main Street because it implies a formality about National Avenue that may not be appropriate; the podium could be more transparent to the roof garden;
- I do not support the brick podium and how it interacts with the tower. I don't see it as a base for the tower but as the tower coming down behind a plainer façade;
- agree that the detailing of the brick base will be very important;
- I would like to see the arcade and entrance being subtly articulated somewhat differently.

Environmental Response of Façade Orientation

- concerns about how each façade responds to differing conditions;
- given the amount of glass in this building, not convinced the environmental issues of cooling and heating should be handled the same on all sides, i.e., the south elevation will have quite a bit of solar gain, requiring a lot of operable windows and possibly the introduction of some brise-soleil on the south and west sides. This would also benefit the architectural expression of the building;
- concerns about having the same type of living spaces on each elevation of the building with no regard for the orientation in terms of solar heat gain;
- agree about responding differently to the various orientations of the building.

Cornice

- the form does not benefit in any way from the cornice appliqué; it could easily be deleted from this project with a little more rigour applied to the design of the actual tower;
- the cornice does not add any verticality to the building;
- the cornice line does not feel well thought out;
- concur that the cornice is not particularly adding to the quality of the design.

Retail

- consider extending the retail further south;
- retail should be extended further southward;
- like the idea of pulling the retail back a bit along Main Street towards the lounge;
- the project would benefit by having the retail extend along Main Street as far as possible past lobby lounge given these spaces tend to be fairly large inactive spaces.

General Comments

- missed opportunity not to acknowledge the major open space across Main Street to the southwest;
- no problem with the garbage being on National provided ventilation and its appearance are dealt with appropriately;
- support for continuing the sidewalk treatments in the neighbourhood;
- concerning the widened sidewalk on National Avenue, some concerns that it ends very abruptly and it doesn't feel like a purposeful place. There could be better use of that space.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Perkins thanked the Panel for some good suggestions and said they will work with staff to continue to develop the project including strengthening the base. They will also continue to work with staff on the brick colour. Eric Martin, Bosa Development Corp., said he concurred with much of the Panel's commentary and said they will be making some fairly substantial changes to the project.

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3. Address: 301 Kingsway
DA: 407822
Use: Mixed (11 storeys, 110 units)
Zoning: C-3A
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Busby & Assoc.
Owner: IntraCorp Developments Ltd.
Review: First
Delegation: Peter Busby, Tom Miller, Pung Liui
Staff: Mary Beth Rondeau
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

Introduction: Mary Beth Rondeau, Development Planner, presented this application in the C-3A zone and briefly reviewed the guideline expectations for the site. The proposal is for a residential development in a midrise tower with townhouses and a commercial front on Kingsway. Following a brief description of the project, she noted that the requested FSR and height relaxations must be earned in terms of the provision of open space, pedestrian amenities, consideration for traffic, and livability. C-3A permits a height of 70 ft. and 1.0 FSR. The application seeks up to 100 ft. for a portion of the residential building, and 3.0 FSR.

Applicant's Opening Comments: Peter Busby, Architect, briefly described the design rationale, noting it is a very economical project. The project will be seeking LEED certification level. The applicant team responded to questions from Panel members.

Panel's Comments: The Panel unanimously supported this application and commended the applicant team for the character of the building and the diversity of residential units it will add to the city's housing stock. The Panel considered the project had earned the relaxations being sought.

The Panel also commended the applicant for the intention to seek LEED certification for this project. Some Panel members urged the applicant to seek silver level, noting it would be a major selling feature for the market that this building is likely to attract.

The Panel strongly supported the choice of materials, with some suggestions to consider simplifying the material palette. There were also several suggestions to give careful consideration to the colour scheme.

The Panel strongly recommended including continuous canopy protection along Kingsway and incorporating it into the palette of materials.

The Panel found the townhouses to be a good transition to the neighbouring single family residences across the street. Some overhang above the townhouse entries was recommended.

The Panel supported the architect's proposal for more design development at the northeast corner of the tower where the supergraphic frame meets the corner. The Panel agreed this needs better resolution. In general, the Panel found the south and east facades of the tower less well developed than the north and west façades.

It was noted that while the suites are quite interesting and incorporate some innovative ideas, the corridor in front of the elevator is extremely narrow. Even small opportunities for social interaction would be valuable for the residents.

A suggestion was made to add a second high window to the suites on the saw tooth edge so that these small suites have light from two sides.

Some Panel members questioned the need to extend the materials used on the tower to the townhouses because they appear as separate elements. The language of the apartment building and the townhouses could be more distinct.

It was noted that the acute corners on Kingsway are an unusual condition in a grid city and perhaps more could be done to take advantage of it. One recommendation was to consider something at pedestrian level on this corner, possibly retail. There was also a recommendation that the project might respond more strongly to the automobile scale of Kingsway.

With respect to the ground plane, a recommendation was made to provide some kind of gesture to receive pedestrians crossing from Prince Edward Street, e.g., something more interesting happening on the boulevard to provide a better separation from the traffic. A suggestion was made to consider some usable outdoor space on part of the roof of the lower portion of the building.

Given the project is seeking LEED certification, a recommendation was made to provide gardening opportunities for the residents. Provision for on-site composting would also be a positive feature.

One Panel member had some livability concerns with the courtyard where public open space overlooks private open space. It was suggested that one way of improving this would be by the private open spaces not being strictly orthogonal. Design development to the stairway to the courtyard off East 11th Avenue was also recommended.

The Panel felt that this building will make a significant contribution to Kingsway and hoped it will set a precedent for other Kingsway developments to follow.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Busby said he appreciated the Panel's suggestions. They will be incorporated in design development.

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4. Address: 5380 Oben Street
DA: 407743
Use: Residential (26 storeys, 251 units)
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Architect: Lawrence Doyle
Owner: Crowley Drive Holdings
Review: First
Delegation: Larry Doyle, Richard Henry, Randal Sharp, Lisa Lock
Staff: Bob Adair
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-1)

Introduction: Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application in Collingwood Village. The proposal is the second of two “signature” towers. The 24-storey tower at 3663 Crowley has already been approved. A Text Amendment to the original CD-1 permitted these towers to be higher than most of the towers previously approved in this development, in return for increased open space on the site. A circular walkway links a park, a plaza and the two taller towers.

The proposal is for a 26-storey residential tower with a 4-storey element. Underground parking is accessed off Vanness Avenue. The main pedestrian entry is at the southwest corner facing the park. The tower steps back at various intervals in accordance with the floorplate sizes established in the CD-1 zoning.

The areas in which the advice of the Panel is sought relate to:

- whether the proposal responds adequately to the guideline recommendation that the towers be designed to emphasize slenderness;
- the overall treatment of the circular pedestrian walkway which is intended to be a unifying feature in the whole design;
- detailed design response of the main entry to the tower.

Applicant’s Opening Comments: Richard Henry, Architect, agreed that the relationship of the two signature towers with the park is a critical issue. Parking access is as prescribed in the guidelines. He stressed that considerable attention has been paid to the streetscape in the whole development, including maintaining “eyes on the street” with elevated terraces and entrances porches along the streets. With respect to the form and the massing, Mr. Henry explained how they have responded to the guideline calling for emphasis on verticality and slenderness. He sought the Panel’s comments on their request for a 2 m height relaxation for the lantern element on the roof, noting the intent for this to be a signature building. It does not add floor area to the scheme. The applicant team responded to the Panel’s questions.

Panel’s Comments: The Panel strongly supported this application. Panel members found it to be a competently developed standard building rather than a “signature” tower and some members questioned whether a signature tower is appropriate for this site.

Given that the height and floorplate conform to the zoning, the Panel generally found the proportions of the tower and the tower detailing to be quite well handled. The Panel acknowledged the challenge of creating the appearance of slenderness with such a large floorplate.

The Panel had some suggestions for accentuating the tower's slimness, including consideration for reconfiguring some of the windows and exploring the use of glass for de-emphasizing the corners. There was also a suggestion that it might be better not to broaden out the dark frame at the lower floors. Another suggestion was to explore pulling up the "waist" of the tower to increase the appearance of slenderness.

With respect to the entry, there was a recommendation to consider raising its height or carving it back. Another suggestion was to include a much larger canopy, possibly integrating it with the trellis and picking up on the circular form. As well, there was a recommendation to consider the entrance stairs and their relation to the circle, i.e., the first few steps could be perpendicular to the circle so that the entry is more off the pathway.

With respect to the circular walkway, the Panel found it to be quite awkward and questioned whether it would be very apparent at ground level. There were recommendations for stronger definition, including more hard detailing or brick walls, which would also help to strengthen the sense of entry. There was also a suggestion to remove the trees at the end or relocate them to be more in line with the circular geometry. A comment was made by one Panel member that it is unfortunate there is no opportunity to revisit earlier decisions that may no longer be appropriate.

There was a recommendation to consider eliminating the loading access.

Livability concerns were expressed with respect to some of the suites. A review of the junction between suites J and G1 was recommended, particularly with respect to the condition where units overlook the parking ramp.

One Panel member suggested the colour could be more different from the sister tower.

The Panel had no objections to the slight overheight requested by the applicant.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Henry expressed his appreciation for the Panel's comments. He noted the issues of "signature" and slenderness could have been dealt with much more easily with a 30-storey tower with a smaller floorplate. He appreciated the Panel's comments with respect to the fenestration and the colour palette and agreed that more can be done to emphasize slenderness. He explained that the Park Board will not entertain reconsideration of the plaza loading so they are continuing to work on making the parkette work in some manner.

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5. Address: 57 Lakewood Drive
DA: 407711
Use: Seniors Congregate Housing
Zoning: C-2
Application Status: Complete
Architect: W. T. Leung
Owner: Champion Development Group Inc.
Review: First
Delegation: Wing Ting Leung, Douglas Millar
Staff: Bob Adair
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

Introduction: Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application for a seniors' congregate housing facility at the southwest corner of Dundas Street and Lakewood Drive, in the C-2 zone. Mr. Adair briefly reviewed the site context. The project is a four-storey building containing 94 self-contained studio and one-bedroom units. Access to underground parking is from the lane and the main vehicular entry and drop-off is at the lane. The project also contains two retail spaces on the Dundas Street frontage. There are amenity areas on the ground floor with the residential units above. The roof is landscaped and there is also an amenity area on the top floor. The building is brick clad with glass and spandrel panels.

The advice of the Panel is sought on the following:

- the parking and access ramp (relationship to windows);
- treatment of the lane (amount of paving);
- overall massing of the building on both Lakewood and Dundas frontages;
- resolution of the building ends at parapet level;
- the Lakewood Drive façade.

Applicant's Opening Comments: Wing Ting Leung, Architect, reviewed the design rationale and Doug Millar described the requirements for congregate housing residents. The applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.

Panel's Comments: The Panel unanimously supported this application and acknowledged the applicant's obvious enthusiasm for the project. The applicant was commended for proposing concrete construction in a 40ft. high building. The Panel also applauded the applicant for managing to get everything on one level on this very sloping site.

The Panel generally supported the massing in terms of its proportions. One comment was that the corner suffers somewhat by having the solid part raised up which takes away from the glazed corner element. Another observation was that there seem to be a lot of openings at the base which detracts from the need for this type of building to be well anchored to the ground. In general, the massing and articulation of the south elevation was preferred to the north.

One Panel member questioned whether having a corner lounge on every floor would work noting that common areas work much better if they are more related to the elevator lobby where residents are coming and going.

The very small size of the units was of concern to one Panel member who thought the City's standards for congregate housing were inadequate. The applicant was urged to at least consider showers with seating in place of tiny bathrooms.

The Panel had serious concerns about locating the dining room on the lower level noting this will be the major socializing space in this building. A suggestion was made to consider obtaining an equivalency to provide some glass or opening between the upper and lower level dining area, possibly introducing a stair and providing a much more open and visible space for people to be able to see above and below. One Panel member also cautioned that there may be issues around servicing.

With respect to the parking entry at the lane, the Panel strongly recommended reverting to an earlier solution described by the architect whereby the entry was parallel to the lane. It was stressed that in this instance the residents should take precedence over turning radius requirements. Straightening up the ramp would also address the livability issues raised by the proximity of the ramp to some of the units. As well, it would provide the opportunity for a landscape buffer to the lane and address the concern about too much paving. There was also a suggestion to consider a change of material to lessen the amount of asphalt.

A further comment about the lane was that it does have some potential in terms of its south orientation, suggesting it might be a more appropriate location for the dining room, with other amenity rooms facing Dundas Street.

There were a number of suggestions to increase the height of the parapet. It would add weight to the top of the building and help accentuate the massing proportions. It could also be integrated with a guardrail to provide an added sense of security for the residents using the roof deck. A higher parapet could also help with the resolution of the rooftop mechanical equipment.

There was a strong recommendation to consider the use of real grass on the roof as opposed to something artificial.

Applicant's Response: Mr. Leung thanked the Panel for the comments and noted they have already considered many of the issues raised. He said the intention is that the dining room would have some transparency from the upper floor lobby and noted that half the dining room is at street level, at grade. Mr. Leung agreed that the units are very small. He said the intent is to provide showers with seating.

