
URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 19, 2001

TIME: 4.00 p.m.

PLACE: Committee Room #1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Tom Bunting, Chair
Walter Francl, Deputy Chair
Lance Berelowitz
Jeffrey Corbett
Richard Henry
Joseph Hruda
Maurice Pez
Sorin Tatomir

REGRETS: Alan Endall
Gerry Eckford
Bruce Hemstock
Jack Lutsky

RECORDING SECRETARY: Rae Ratslef, Raincoast Ventures

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 298 Thurlow (1088 Cordova)
2. 1055 Homer (401 Helmcken) & 1085 Homer (401 Helmcken)
3. 546-576 West 7 th Avenue (2300 Ash)

Chair Bunting reported regarding the Development Permit Board meeting on September 17, 2001 at which 1010 Richards was considered. Most discussion around the project related to a proposed ten year housing agreement with the City and concerning the project's ability to earn the heritage bonus on the basis of urban design.

1. Address:	298 Thurlow (1088 Cordova)
DA:	406001
Use:	Mixed (40 storeys)
Zoning:	CD-1
Architect:	James Cheng
Owner:	Burrard Landing Lot 2 Holding Ltd.
Review:	1 st
Staff:	Mike Kemble

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

• **Introduction**

Mike Kemble, Planning Department, introduced the application noting that it had been previously viewed by the Panel in two workshops and as a rezoning application. Referencing the project model, Mr. Kemble led the panel in a detailed review of the project in the context of the surrounding area.

Previous Panel concerns were reviewed and related to the possibility of an additional tower occurring on the site in the event that the Convention Centre proposal did not proceed, and regarding the lower massing of both towers and their relationship to each other. Mr. Kemble reviewed principle changes to the project since the rezoning that related to the stepping, podium shape, expression of the canopy on top of the third storey, and refinements to the tower.

Mr. Kemble requested the Panel's comments regarding:

- view impacts of the project;
- public opening spaces, pedestrian experience, animation at the street level and weather protection;
- building colours and materials and articulation of the tower top;
- lower podium massing and change in stepping;
- vehicular arrival space on the east side of the building;
- whether public atrium earns the exclusion of 5,500 sq ft from the FSR; and
- integration of the public and private realms on the site.

In response to questions, Mr. Kemble provided information on the concept of live-work units and regarding the City's guidelines in relation to public atriums.

• **Applicant's Opening Comments**

James Cheng, Dawn Guspie and Chris Philips joined the Panel for consideration of this Item.

Mr. Cheng commented regarding changes made to the project since rezoning and discussed the design of the site to move people from the downtown core, through the public spaces to the water. Information was relayed regarding efforts to soften the shoulders of the building through the provision of trellising around the outdoor daycare play areas and mechanical transitions. Efforts to create an interesting tower top that would have a distinctive look from all angles and that would provide visual interest to the skyline were also discussed. Also, information was provided regarding the addition of an entrance to accommodate people travelling from the site to the downtown core, concerning the building materials and colour palate, public area and street treatments, atrium programming, and the Thurlow plaza design.

Mr. Philips commented regarding the link that the Thurlow plaza would provide to the waterfront and concerning other features of the site, such as its wide sidewalks and partially covered walkways, designed to accommodate the flow of pedestrian traffic. Comments were also offered concerning the conscious effort to abstractly represent the Vancouver landscape, the design of the drop off area to include a water element, and the proposed configuration of the plaza in the event that the Convention Centre does not proceed.

In response to questions from the Panel, the applicants provided additional information regarding:

- pedestrian amenities of the site;
- design and intended programming of the public atrium;
- private open spaces;
- daily contact of the applicants with the Convention Centre planning team;
- impact of the design on the Thurlow view corridor;
- street system in the event that the Convention Centre does not proceed;
- means of ensuring that the public right of way is respected by the lower level tenant.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

- **Panel's Comments**

Panel members commented on the difficulty of assessing this site given the lack of information regarding the surrounding context. Notwithstanding this, unanimous support for the project's overall design was expressed.

Regarding the street pedestrian interface, Panel members commented that changes made went a long way to addressing previously noted concerns and that the thoroughfare makes the best efforts to respond to the current area around the building. However, concern was raised regarding the location of the crosswalks and shortcomings were noted concerning the lack of rain protection, canopies, and lighting to animate the street scape. It was suggested that weather protection at the north edge of the project is very important.

Several Panel members also commented that there was an abruptness to the tower meeting the street on the north side. While this is appropriate to the tower, it was suggested that a softening of the edge and an implication of penetrability on the north facade would be desirable. Many members also questioned the appropriateness of the serrated north wall along the street. The continuity of the street edge and the public space across Canada Place Way seems weakened by this design.

With respect to the public atrium element of the project, several Panel members indicated the need for a more compelling argument and clearer visual example of the intended programming for the space to prove its use as a public amenity. Others discussed the interesting potential of the area and suggested that the exclusion of the space from FSR would be supportable subject to a legal commitment in terms of programming the space for public use.

Panel members did not express concerns regarding the impact of the project on views.

Comments from Panel members regarding the podium and tower massing, articulation and detail included that the removal of the lower stepping makes the composition stronger, that the massing of the building works well and the stepping is much more appropriate to the overall shape of the building. One member suggested that the tower top would be prominent on the harbour front, like a beacon

element, while another suggested it was too fussy. One additional concern raised was the suggestion that the project's relation to the hotel was ill resolved given the hotel's incorrect orientation.

General approval was expressed for the building materials and colour palate and for the trellising elements and overall comments were offered concerning the quiet, reserved elegance of the project. Some differentiation of major massing components and their materials to heighten the contrast was suggested.

Concerning the berm area, several members expressed concern that it could be problematic as an urban form given its complexity. Alternately, several members suggested that the berm spaces would create very nice intimate areas away from the street, and that the elevated trees would protect against sounds. Some members also questioned the appropriateness of this design given that this space will serve as a major entry port to the future Convention Centre and waterfront plaza. A more urban scaled and designed open place may be a better option.

With respect to the drop off court between the site and the future hotel, one member questioned whether a more detailed urban design for the space would be more appropriate. However, others suggested that the materials were harmonious and that it was done very well. Suggestion was made that a public walkway away from the building might be an advantageous addition.

- **Applicant's Response**

James Cheng thanked the Panel for its comments and expressed appreciation for suggestions provided. Assurance was offered that the applicants would work on refinements to the project prior to its presentation to the Board.

2a. Address: 1055 Homer (401 Helmcken)
DA: 405652
Use: Mixed (26 storeys, 135 units)
Zoning: DD
Architect: Brook Development Planning Inc.
Owner: Qualex Landmark Development Inc.
Review: 1st
Staff: Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-1)

2b. Address: 1085 Homer (401 Helmcken)
DA: 406084
Use: Mixed (6 storeys)
Zoning: DD
Architect: Stuart Howard
Owner: Yaletown Management Ltd.
Review: 1st
Staff: Anita Molaro

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction**

Anita Molaro, Planning, referencing the minutes relating to the Panel's previous preliminary review of the application and a project model, introduced the applications for 1055 and 1085 Homer. Information was also provided regarding issues raised at the preliminary application which included how the two components of the project related to each other and the accessibility of semi-private open space. Comments were also offered regarding the Development Permit Board review.

The Panel's comments were sought with respect to:

- integration of the resolution of the two components;
- scale of brick framing within the residential component;
- quality and accessibility of semi-private open space;
- resolution of lane treatment and landscaping and change in elevation; and
- scale of the six storey elevation along the lane.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments**

Chuck Brook, Jane Durante, Stuart Howard and Foad Rafii joined the Panel for consideration of this Item.

Mr. Rafii commented regarding the project's goal to integrate its two elements while falling within the guidelines of Downtown South and respecting neighbouring Yaletown. Comments were also offered regarding efforts to improve residential open spaces and concerning other improvements made to the residential component since the preliminary.

Mr. Howard discussed the commercial building on the site and commented specifically concerning the glazing on the lower floors, stepped back upper floor, street facades, cornice line, and the removal of shared aspects of the site in terms of exits in order to give more usable open space to the residential component. Information was also provided regarding the addition of disabled access and weather protection to the roof and regarding the location of 2,500 sq ft of retail around the perimeter of the building.

Ms. Durante discussed landscaping elements of the site and applicants responded to the Panel's questions regarding building materials and colours.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

- **Panel's Comments**

In general Panel members agreed that the two buildings had been well integrated. Consensus was that the Homer streetscape works as a composition, that the two buildings do not have to be identical, and that the reference to Yaletown is appropriate. Several members suggested that the projects are formally very simple and refreshing in their design.

Several comments for improvements to the residential tower were offered and related to the need for clearer definition between the street podium and the start of the tower. Suggestions to either set the tower back or create a stronger cornice break were offered. Also, appreciation was expressed for the improvements to the semi-private open space in terms of accessibility and its rationale. Also, differing opinions were expressed concerning the way in which the tower steps up and regarding the appropriateness of its four components and their respective colours. Many felt this gave the tower an awkward expression. It was suggested a more conventional three-part tower may be more readable. This may be accomplished by joining two of the tower parts into one.

Diverging comments were offered with regard to the use of the lane for residential, while some members suggested that it is not appropriate to have the landscaping in the lane and that this should be treated as a back rather than front door, others expressed support for the clever approach to providing urban courtyards in a high density environment. One member expressed concern regarding the direction to make every space usable and suggested that unless there is meaningful connections between open spaces that they become solely visual amenities. One member also suggested the townhomes should be closer to and more forcefully front the lane.

The Panel expressed its unanimous support for the commercial design and offered various suggestions for a better integration of the commercial element's elevator box. Also, member's differing opinions were offered regarding the raised brow and canted window of the commercial with several members expressing their support and others disliking the design.

- **Applicant's Response**

Messrs. Rafii and Stuart thanked the Panel for their comments and advised that their recommendations would be taken into consideration.

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| 3. Address: | 546-576 West 7th Avenue (2300 Ash) |
| DA: | 406035 |
| Use: | Office-Heritage |
| Zoning: | C-3A |
| Architect: | Chernoff Thompson |
| Owner: | Mesa Chemical Corp. |
| Review: | 2nd |
| Staff: | Mary Beth Rondeau |
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-2)

- **Introduction**

Mary Beth Rondeau, Planning, referencing the project model, introduced the proposal for 546-576 West 7th Avenue in the context of the surrounding area. It was noted that this was the Panel's second viewing of the complete application and information concerning the intended use of the site was provided. The Panel was reminded of staff's support for the retention and relocation of the heritage house on this site.

Panel members were requested to comment regarding whether the project earns the requested floor space and guideline massing relaxations, and were advised of staff's general support for the project's redesign.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments**

Russell Chernoff, Jane Durante, and Neil Godfrey joined the Panel for consideration of this Item.

Mr. Chernoff discussed the means by which the Panel's previously raised concerns had been addressed by reshaping the corner of the building to eliminate its bulkiness and to create a visual relationship between the house on this site and the neighbouring site. The reshaping has caused a minor infringement into the view corridor but it does not impact the sky or mountain views. More plaza space has been created and allows for the flow through of pedestrian traffic on the corner, also the intention to open up the heritage house, perhaps as a coffee shop, for public use and enjoyment was noted.

Ms. Durante discussed the project's landscape design and commented on the additional greening.

The Panel reviewed the model and posted materials.

- **Panel's Comments**

The Panel expressed its general support for the massing and had no concerns regarding the requested relaxation in regards to the building width. Suggested improvements related to reducing the number of bays of the streetfront two storey frame expression to the east to help the entry and monotony of the frame by cutting down yardage. Also, to add detail and higher quality materials to help the pedestrian interest along 7th Avenue. A more detailed canopy and more substantial ground floor pilaster was suggested.

It was suggested that the lane elevation needs more set back given its close proximity to its southern neighbour and work to detail the materials along the lane was suggested. No concerns were expressed with regard to the slight erosion of the view corridor.

Panel members commented on the major initial moves on the site that were plainly wrong, namely the use and the retention of the heritage house. It was suggested that these initial difficulties provided the remainder of the challenges that the project was faced with. It was generally agreed that the project was greatly improved over its earlier submission given the encumbrances that had to be dealt with.

- **Applicant's Response**

The applicant thanked the Panel for its comments and advised that efforts would be made to explore the detailing along the street level to be pedestrian scale and to address other comments offered.

- 4. **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.