

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** September 22, 2010

**TIME:** 4.00 pm

**PLACE:** Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Bruce Haden (Chair)  
James Cheng  
Jeff Corbett  
David Godin  
Jim Huffman  
Oliver Lang  
Steve McFarlane  
Vladimir Mikler (Excused Item #1)  
Maurice Pez

**REGRETS:**  
Jane Durante  
Scott Romses  
Alan Storey  
Robert Barnes

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

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ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1215 Bidwell Street
2.	Norquay Neighbourhood Centre

**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Haden called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 1215 Bidwell Street  
DE: 414141  
Description: Construction of a 19-storey mixed-use development containing residential units and retail units at the grade level. This is a STIR project containing 49 rental housing units.  
Zoning: CD-1  
Application Status: Complete  
Review: Second (first review was Rezoning)  
Owner: Millennium Properties  
Architect: Henriquez Partners Architects  
Delegation: Gregory Henriquez, Henriquez Partners Architects  
Jennifer Stamp, Durante Kreuk, Landscape Architects  
Staff: Ralph Segal

**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)**

- **Introduction:** Ralph Segal, Senior Architect/Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a building at the corner of Davie and Bidwell Streets. Mr. Segal noted that the Panel had seen the proposal as a rezoning application. The proposal has been through a public hearing and Council has approved the rezoning. Mr. Segal gave some background on the proposal noting the zoning was changed from C-5 to CD-1. He also noted that under C-5 zoning a 210 foot high tower is allowed and the proposal does goes to 210 feet. The public benefit being offered in the proposal includes 49 rental units under the STIR program.

When the Panel last saw the proposal there were 33 rental units but was increased to 49 units along with the retention of the heritage façade on the Bidwell Street side (Maxine's). Regarding sustainability, Mr. Segal noted that the applicant is targeting LEED™ Gold. Mr. Segal gave some background from the previous review of the Panel's noting there were some comments regarding how the Davie Street podium component sitting above retail was composed and there were some comments regarding the expression of the heritage façade retention. The Panel suggested the heritage component rather than containing the residential lobby should be retained for some public use.

Mr. Segal noted that the proposal was at the development application stage. In terms of the rezoning staff have asked the applicant to look at the party wall condition and how that would be treated. The podium is a four storeys proposal on Davie Street with the retail on the ground floor and the residential entry moved to the Davie Street side so that heritage will now contain a retail/restaurant component. There is a courtyard being created at the lane corner with a deeper recess on the heritage side. In terms of the podium and its expression, it is more substantive and will be clad in stone. There has been a greater articulation on the party wall expression and is massing the same as seen at rezoning. However, the tower has less of a curving aspect and the facades have taken on a more linear aspect but with a greater emphasis on green screens and a more distinctive cap element on the tower.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

- Has the heritage component been successful integrated into the proposal?

- The Panel's comments are sought on the podium expression and materials.
- The Panel's comments are sought on the party wall expression.
- The Panel's comments are sought on how the architecture has evolved.

Mr. Segal took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Gregory Henriquez, Architect, further described the proposal noting that they had taken over the project from another firm. Originally the design had a more art deco style that was more in keeping to the Spanish colonial concept and they were proposing saving the entire heritage building. When they did their original design the proposal was merely to do a two dimensional façade in a more modern concept that would be a foil to the heritage. However, both the heritage community and the design panel wanted to see more depth to the façade so that it had some integrity. Mr. Henriquez noted that they are implementing a little courtyard space for a restaurant as well as creating views into the heritage building.

Originally the base of the building was to be brick as a foil to the heritage however at the last review the Panel thought it should be more modern in its expression. As a result they have created a more minimalist façade that will be a better foil to the more decorative heritage building. Mr. Henriquez said they tried to find a poetic expression for the green goals that they have for the project. They wanted to make a statement publicly that not only was the building going to be sustainable and a LEED™ Gold building but they were going to find a way to express that in the architecture. As a result there is an element on the roof that will catch the rain water and then the water will come down the building to the cisterns in the basement. They also created a series of sun shades that are sculptured into the façade. The greenery will help to break up some of the massing and add another dimension to the building. Mr. Henriquez noted that the project was conceived before the STIR program when they came up with the idea of integrating rental housing with market housing. The plan calls for a shared lobby, elevator and amenities for both the rental and market residents.

Jennifer Stamp, Landscape Architect, described the landscaping plans for the ground floor noting there are a number of existing trees along Bidwell and Davie Streets that will be retained. The main entry will be off Davie Street and will be emphasized with architectural screens and a water feature. There is to be a courtyard off Bidwell Street for dining. Greenery is planned for the second level podium which is the main amenity deck. It will contain an outdoor dining area, urban agriculture, children's play area and areas to sit. Also there are several rain water leaders that come down to a rock pit before the water goes into the underground cisterns. The water collected will be used for irrigation. On the upper podium there will be some semi-private patios on the northeast side of the tower. Adjacent to the interior amenity room is another landscaped deck with a fireplace area and an open patio area with water views.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - Design development to enhance the autonomy and presence of the heritage component relative to the other building components. This could include simplification and/or material change in components adjacent to the heritage piece especially on the northeast corner.
  - Consider adding a restaurant patio to the northeast corner.
  - Design development to enhance the visual richness of the Davie Street façade and its perceived quality.

- Consider parking reductions or separate pricing for parking.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal and thought there were some notable improvements since the rezoning and would be a respectful addition to the West End.

Several Panel members thought there could be some design development on the Davie Street elevation where the rental component will be located as it didn't seem to be a good relationship to the rest of the project. They noted that there was a lot of contrasting materials at that location. One Panel member suggested that it was a matter of cultural sustainability that the rental component should have the same quality as the rest of the building. Also the Panel suggested that the stone work on the end of the rental component, which has the glazing coming down to grade, should stand on its own. Another Panel member wondered if that stone wall was going to compete with the heritage more than if it was wrapped in glass as it seemed like the two solids were competing with each other.

Several Panel members thought the base could use some work. They thought the rental component seemed foreign to the market component and was more like a 1960's modernistic building. They thought the heritage building had a lot going on but didn't seem to be highlighted. One Panel member thought the heritage building should be the jewel of the project and that the STIR units could be simplified in the tower.

The Panel commended the applicant for moving the lobby out of the heritage building and into the Davie Street side of the project. They commended the applicant for making the amenity space available for both the rental and market unit residents. They also thought there were some nice livable floor plans and that it would be a good residential building.

The Panel said they appreciated the number of STIR programs that have integrated the market circulation and entry with the rental. One Panel member noted that the parking ratio seemed rather high noting that car ownership is down in the area due to the amount of transit available. Reducing the number of parking spaces would help to bring down the cost for building the project.

The Panel supported the landscape plans although they thought the outdoor space on the lane could be better incorporated into the proposal. They didn't want to see the heritage piece copied but the landscaping could make the heritage stand out more. One Panel member thought the interface with the existing retail was awkward and suggested adding a patio on the northeast corner if the location of the exhaust was reconsidered. It was also noted that the south facing patio seemed to be right next to the garbage and the applicant might want to reconsider its location. Most of the Panel liked that the street trees added some character to the heritage building. One Panel member thought the trees on the top of the Davie Street façade could be reduced.

Several Panel members acknowledged the applicant for the well located bicycle parking.

The Panel supported the sustainability program and thought it was going in a positive direction noting that the green screen was an interesting element. Most of the Panel thought the parking could be reduced noting that the building is close to transit. One Panel member suggested selling the parking spaces rather than having them as part of the unit purchase price. Another Panel member suggested taking the storage area out of the STIR units and putting it in the underground area.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant had no comments.

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2. Address:	Norquay Neighbourhood Centre
DE:	Non-Voting Workshop
Description:	to seek advice on the overall Neighbourhood Centre
Zoning:	N/A
Application Status:	N/A
Review:	First
Owner:	N/A
Architect:	N/A
Delegation:	N/A
Staff:	Paul Cheng and Neal LaMontagne

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#### EVALUATION: Non-Voting Workshop

- **Introduction:** Neil LaMontagne, Planner, noted that this was the second neighbourhood centre following the Kingsway/Knight Neighbourhood Centre that is located slightly to the west. This neighbourhood centre is located along Nanaimo Street and the East 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue Skytrain Station. The plan boundaries also include Gladstone and Killarney Streets. It has an established neighbourhood character and through the neighbourhood centre plan there is an intention to implement community vision's directions. He noted that they are planning to do a couple of big things including new housing choices, particularly ground oriented housing types that work well for families. The second is add a boost of energy to Kingsway that will help it fit better with the character and orientation of the street as well as some public realm improvements that will help enhance the pedestrian environment.

Paul Cheng, Development Planner, further described the neighbourhood plan noting that three of the main neighbourhood centre directions they are trying to carry through will include a place to provide public spaces for strolling, window shopping, conversation and entertainment which link the centre with the rest of the neighbourhood. Secondly to create places where people will buy from shops, have jobs and use neighbourhood based services, as well as public places that are safe and inviting and a place to meet with neighbours and enjoy community life. Thirdly the plan will provide new and different types of housing in neighbourhoods that have limited housing variety at the moment. The area is zoned C-2 on Kingsway and RS-1 everywhere else. The current condition of Kingsway has a change in topography culminating around Duchess Street and there are very long blocks that are triple the typical block in Vancouver and as a result there are very few lighted crossings. Currently there are few pedestrians using the sidewalks. In some places the sidewalk is very narrow which is a result of C-2 zoning. Most of the buildings along this part of Kingsway are single or double storeys. The businesses tend to be more car oriented with a lot of curve cuts off of Kingsway and very few street trees.

The plan is to claim Kingsway back for the pedestrian. There are a couple of basic moves planned including widening the sidewalks to make it more comfortable for the pedestrian. The plan is to double the width of the sidewalk from twelve to twenty-five feet. There are three classifications for pedestrian activity: utilitarian which conveys pedestrian movement; recreational which can be for people sitting for a rest or window activity; social activities are where people feel the most comfortable in a public realm where there is room for eating outdoors, reading and resting and even playing on the sidewalk.

Mr. Cheng said that they believe that when you double the sidewalk width you will start to see some of those recreational activities happen and when you triple the width of the sidewalk, which they will try to do in certain focused areas along Kingsway, you start to get other activities such as eating, resting and playing. They want to double the width of the sidewalk along the whole length of Kingsway with the exception of the 2400 Hotel site

where they want to triple the width of the sidewalk to forty feet. An example of this is the sidewalk in front of the Best Buy and Save-on-Foods on Cambie Street north of City Hall. They also want to have the forty foot wide sidewalk at Earls Street and Kingsway.

Complimenting the wider sidewalks there are a couple of other moves planned that will see development happening with lighted crossings in the middle of the blocks where the blocks are twelve hundred feet long. Cutting down those blocks into six hundred lengths will help the pedestrian connections. They also want to create pedestrian mews that will take the connections further into the neighbourhood. They plan on having a mews in the future that will take pedestrians over to the East 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue Skytrain station. Mr. Cheng noted that mid block crossing also help to slow down traffic.

Another layer that is planned is three different enhanced public squares. One is planned for the Canadian Tire site and the other one for the Purdy's Chocolate site. Also, they will be requiring new public plazas to the size of about 6,000 to 8,000 square feet in size. The mother of all public realm improvements is the 2400 Motel site. The programming will include a large public plaza on the south part of the site (about 20,000 square feet in size), an indoor community gathering space (possibly a Neighbourhood House), a grocery store, which is needed in the neighbourhood, and small retail fronting Kingsway. It will also include two mid rise types of buildings of twelve to sixteen storeys in height. They have also written into their plan a third building that is a little higher if consolidation happens on the Church's Chicken site.

Finally they are committed to doing some park improvements on Norquay Park which is under construction at the moment. They plan on adding new lamp standards, benches, bike racks and new trees. A double row of trees is planned for the forty foot wide sidewalks.

Mr. Cheng described the housing plan for the area. For Kingsway, they plan to retain the C-2 zoning which is for four storeys and 2.5 FSR, however the Director of Planning does have the power to relax the height but not the density. With this particular zoning they are introducing in the plan the power for the Director of Planning to relax that height limitation from four to six storeys and will not require rezoning. In exchange for the six storeys, they will require the extra twelve feet on the sidewalk to make it twenty-four feet in width.

Although the C-2 zoning is for 2.5 FSR they are essentially looking at 3.2 FSR for all areas whenever a rezoning should occur which will allow for more articulation on the building. They started with the notion that six storeys is human scale as there is still a relationship to the ground plane. Six storeys continuously as a cornice line isn't necessarily what they want to achieve as there is something to be said about letting slots of sunlight get in and also slots with views to the mountains. Instead they are thinking of having an eight, six and four storey type of framework for most of the zones along Kingsway. This will be the predominate type of building form that they will be looking at for rezoning. However, there are a few sites that they are considering looking at going higher but would be in exchange for more ground plane being given to the public realm.

Where there are mid block crossings obviously there is a piece of property that can't be developed so they will allow up to ten storeys for that type of site and where there are plazas they will allow twelve storeys. They will have to look at the site to see if there is enough room to do one or two of these types of buildings. At the moment they think that the Canadian Tire site might be able to handle two buildings.

Mr. Cheng discussed the plans for the transition zone noting the idea is that the 4-storey in C-2 on Kingsway is basically the maximum height without radically disturbing the neighbour's back yard across the lane. They have tried to minimize the shadow impacts and privacy issues that could impact the single family homes. They are planning on making the residential behind the larger heights along Kingsway as a second tier of apartment building, three to four storeys high. The apartment zone is being called the transition zone because it transitions from the high forms on Kingsway down the lower ground oriented housing. He noted that they want to keep the FSR the same as RM-4 (1.5 FSR) but expand the amount of buildable envelope that the zone allows.

Mr. Cheng noted that they are trying to maintain the character of the single family home along with duplex and rowhousing. He described the various types of housing planned for the area. He noted that duplexes will be able to have a lock off suite and this helps to retain the rental capacity in the neighbourhood. The rowhouse zone is a very small area because of the small size of the lots in most of the area. There will be only three blocks that have large enough lots to accommodate row townhouses at 44 feet by 90 feet. The final zone will be for stacked townhouses. They want to allow the building of a large house that will be divided into three 1200 square foot units; all family friendly with three bedrooms. He noted that the Parking By-law will allow one co-op car being supplied along with a parking space on the site in exchange for five normal parking spaces. People might be interested in buying a unit that doesn't have parking as there is transit available on Kingsway as well as the use of the co-op car.

Mr. Cheng described the proposed massing for the neighbourhood. He noted that a lot of the properties along Kingsway are challenging. Some are only eighty feet in depth and so parking relaxations are going to be sought for new construction.

Brent Toderian, Director of Planning, talked about the history of neighbourhood centres noting the one before the Panel was the second one that has been developed and came out of individual community visioning. He stated that they are taking their last community vision to Council on Thursday. It includes citizen support for a neighbourhood centre. In the Knight Street and Kingsway neighbourhood plan they found a significant dissatisfaction with how they were trying to bring about a neighbourhood centre. Norquay has been a challenging exercise and it has had to go through everything from municipal strikes to elections. One of the things that they heard early on was the dissatisfaction in the community for not offering more parks and other social amenities however they are only planning on offering two products at this time. Those two products for neighbourhood centres include a housing plan which was basically a rezoning and streetscape improvements. What they are fundamentally trying to do in the neighbourhood centre is place making. They are still addressing the two products but are wrapping it in a context that tries to do more.

Advice from the Panel on this application is sought on the following:

1. Given that the vehicular traffic volume along Kingsway will not change in the near to mid-future: Does the proposed public realm plan for Kingsway successfully address the directions set out by CityPlan for a Neighbourhood Centre?
2. Do the proposed design parameters for the 2400 Motel site deliver the potential for the site to perform as the heart of the community?
3. Please advise on the appropriateness of the proposed building forms along Kingsway and the Transition Zone, taking into account the function, orientation and width of Kingsway and the desire to retain a relatively low scale for the remainder of the study area.

4. Comments on the proposed transition zone with respect to liveability, compatibility to the low-scale forms across the street, the proposed density and building mass envelope, and the emphasis to supply 3-bedroom units to at least 50% of the unit mix.
5. The new ground-oriented housing areas propose several relatively new zoning innovations including lock-off suites, car co-op parking provisions and floor space and unit densities significantly higher than pre-existing RT zones. Will the physical product of these innovations unduly detract from the overall existing character of the neighbourhood?
6. Much of this plan is based on values that have informed past Vancouver planning practices. These would include the following:
  - Transitioning of physical forms from high-density to mid-density to low-density zones (e.g. C3-A / RM-4 / RT)
  - Maximization of sun access to public spaces
  - Retention of views to the north shore mountains where possible
  - Private open space for as many dwelling units as possible
  - Respect for privacy and sun-access for the private rear yard
  - Maximizing liveability to as many dwelling units as possible

Have these values been properly addressed in this Neighbourhood Centres Plan? Should some of these values be strengthened or compromised, given the current Vancouver context?

7. Does this centre represent great place making?

Staff took questions from the Panel.

- **Related Commentary:** The Panel acknowledged staff for a thorough presentation noting that a lot of work had gone into the plan and thought they were heading in the right direction.
  - The Panel agreed that careful examination of the building forms along Kingsway and forms in the transition area from a sectional perspective would be important. They also supported the approach in the transition area noting that the use of courtyard style housing would open up the space and create nodes of open spaces. A couple of Panel members suggested adding a district energy utility. Another Panel member noted that if it was going to set a precedent in the city the heights should be lower on Kingsway and higher into the transition area. A Panel member suggested that there be more innovation in the design with the use of enclosed balconies, better storage, roof top access, etc.
  - The Panel suggested looking at the Kingsway cross section with respect to all issues of sun access, traffic noise, pedestrian effectiveness as well as being willing to be distinctive and respond to the specific conditions that exist. Several Panel members thought it was important to slow down the traffic along this part of Kingsway and supported reducing traffic speed with the use of mid block crossings.
  - The Panel did not support the massing for the 2400 Motel site noting that it didn't look very inviting. Several Panel members thought there should be a grocery store on the site. Most of the Panel thought that if staff was proposing a place-making site that the scale goes against having that realized at the moment.
  - The panel thought it would be important to create successful street activated uses including retail. They wanted to know what was going to make retail successful in the area. One Panel member suggested adding plaza areas to both sides of Kingsway and that the sunny side could have the wider sidewalks. Another Panel member noted that



the current C-2 zoning is restricting but that there was more potential for the area. He thought that something could be created that engages with the vehicles and works for the pedestrian, cyclists as well as cars.

- The Panel thought there should be more detail attention to the interaction of affordability, unit size, constructability, affordability and parking. One Panel member noted that 1.5 FSR works well in a 4-storey buildings with one level of underground parking. Another Panel member suggested the addition of co-op housing as well as childcare facilities and more park space.
- The Panel supported the opportunity for ground oriented housing and row housing as they thought that was missing in the city. They agreed that affordability would be important. A couple of Panel members noted that buildings over four storeys should be concrete and that there is price sensitivity that could come into play. A couple of Panel members thought there should be a variety of traditional ground oriented topology and were more inclined to support a courtyard topology. One Panel member noted that the south sidewalks would be in shade in areas with 6-storey massings.
- The Panel thought there was a need for a public realm plan as part of the centre and realized that this might happen in the next stage. They realized that it would require little bit more detailing and noting things like the importance of the use adjacency to the public realm, the importance of sun access and the importance of a range of public spaces. It was noted that although Kingsway is a neighbourhood street it is also a regional street and has a certain funky character that should remain.
- The Panel supported reducing parking and use of cars in the neighbourhood and they supported the idea of widening parts of Kingsway but thought it would be important as to how it was handled. One Panel member was disappointed in the amount of parking noting that it would make a dramatic difference in building costs and sustainability if limited parking was planning for the new building sites. Another Panel member noted that it was a missed opportunity to not be considering bicycles including bike racks and lanes along Kingsway.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.