

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 29, 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
Alan Endall
Marta Farevaag (present for Item 1 only)
Steven Keyes
Ronald Lea
Jennifer Marshall
Brian Martin

REGRETS: Mark Ostry
Jeffrey Corbett
Margot Long

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	855 West 12th Avenue (VGH Master Plan)
2.	1380 Hornby Street
3.	100 West 49th Avenue (Langara Campus)

1. Address:	855 West 12th Avenue (VGH Master Plan)
DE:	408792
Use:	Hospital
Zoning:	CD-1
Applicant Status:	Preliminary
Architect:	Davidson Yuen Simpson
Owner:	Vancouver Coastal Health Authority
Review:	First
Delegation:	Ron Yuen, Don Vaughan, Dane Jansen
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Tom Phipps, Major Projects Group Planner, noted that a policy statement was adopted for the VGH Precinct in 2000, followed by a full rezoning of the site in 2002. These policies addressed what will remain on the site and the sizes of the various components but did not resolve the urban design specifics of the relationships between buildings and between buildings and open space. The intent is that this application will address these issues sufficiently so that individual buildings can then be considered with some confidence that the relationships amongst them and between the open space and the built form are appropriate as a precinct.

Scot Hein, Development Planner, advised this preliminary application sets a working framework for the individual development applications to be considered. Development Applications for the Nurses Residence, the energy centre and ambulatory care have already been reviewed previously.

The Panel's advice is sought in two specific areas: the proportion and scale of the buildings adjacent to the main public space, how the individual components of the plan relate both to the major internal corridors and the adjoining streets, and the general direction of the public realm treatment.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** The applicant team presented the design rationale and responded to the Panel's questions.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Clarify (with an intent to strengthen) the differentiation between the building form below the datum and above the datum. Specific guidelines needed about what the datum is going to be in terms of setback and material shifts;
 - Need to introduce guidelines about the façade articulation with the intent to promote continuity of building form and introduce some vertical breaks;
 - Clarification of a base design with the intent of maximizing building continuity, animation at grade, continuity of weather protection and promoting a human scale at the base, and legible entries;
 - The landscape should be treated as a rehabilitation opportunity;
 - Heather Pavilion: the centrality of the form should be matched by an importance of use and permeability, particularly on the south face;

- Details: customization of components and a robust integrated package to support the central role as visual glue that will hold the precinct together. The details should also recognize the unique qualities of people's experience of a hospital.

- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel supported the central common as the organizing principle for the precinct. The addition of some diagonal links through the common was recommended. There was also a comment that the precinct should function as a through route with a series of activities within it to avoid is becoming too much of an exclusive place only for those directly associated with the hospital. There was also a suggestion to consider a vehicle drop-off point to the common on 12th Avenue.

The applicant was commended for the retention and restoration of the Heather Pavilion in the scheme, and it was noted that the way it opens up to the common will be very important to the success of that area. The Panel thought the massive buildings around the common could work provided there is sufficient articulation at the ground plane, including pedestrian weather protection. Breaking down the mass of the buildings to human scale will be essential.

Most Panel members accepted the datum line as proposed but it was stressed that the shoulder definition should be emphasized on the buildings. One Panel member thought the datum line for the shoulder height on the buildings was too low, suggesting it would make the proportion of base to top easier to manage if it were one floor higher.

The Panel stressed the importance of the details as a means of tying the precinct together. Street furniture will need to have a robust texture and be consistent over the long term, possibly achieved by customization. It was stressed that the lighting will need to be really spectacular and include a lot of ambient lighting as well as pole lighting.

Some Panel members thought more attention should be given to the parkade, noting that people visiting this precinct are not necessarily doing so under the most positive circumstances. Way-finding, lighting and signage that is not too institutional looking will be very important. In general the Panel thought the signage program needed a lot more work and greater study to emerge into something interesting for the whole precinct.

One Panel member recommended that care is taken with the treatment at the intersections because they will "read" as important statements about the hierarchy of streets in the city.

Some acknowledgement that Heather Street functions as a bikeway was recommended.

The concept of the site as a therapeutic or rehabilitation precinct was strongly supported and the applicant was encouraged to explore this further, both in the landscape and the buildings. There was also a recommendation to consider promoting Participation in the landscape plan.

It was stressed that the overall concept of the plan, its connections and axes, will need to be reinforced as the detailed massing and landscape guidelines are developed. The major ideas will need to be continually built upon to reinforce the basic concepts.

Some comments on individual buildings included:

Building 5 on Willow, west of the common, feels bulky and heavy; retail and articulation at this street edge will be critical to this building;

Meditec 1: matching the height of the existing cancer research building is acceptable but it might be worth considering setting it back above the shoulder height;

The scale and height of Meditec 5 and 6 is appropriate;

Meditec 1 dominates Broadway too much;
Meditec 2 could be more robust;
In general the style and massing be a little more formal and rigorous;

Some concern was expressed about the “missing tooth” of the eye care centre. It was suggested there needs to be some intention established for this site so that it can be considered in the overall master plan.

2. Address:	1380 Hornby Street (Umberto's)
DE:	408825
Use:	Boutique Hotel & Restaurant (16 storeys)
Zoning:	CD-1
Applicant Status:	Complete after Rezoning
Architect:	Christopher Bozyk
Owner:	Umberto Menghi
Review:	First
Delegation:	Chris Bosyk, Greg Smallenberg, Robert Lemon
Staff:	Scot Hein

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Scot Hein, Development Planner, presented this application. The Panel supported the proposal at the rezoning stage. The main design development conditions of the rezoning related to the interface with the adjacent courtyard to the north, the north elevation interface, and the relationship of the yellow house to its adjacency with the new boutique hotel to the north and the courtyard at the rear. Since the rezoning one change has occurred on the Hornby frontage whereby the corner element has been increased by one floor.

Issues of use, form, general massing and public benefit have been determined at the rezoning stage. The Panel's advice is sought on the response to the rezoning conditions and on the recent change to the Hornby frontage.

- **Applicant's Opening Comments:** Chris Boyzyk, Architect, described the changes to the scheme since the Panel's last review. He briefly described the design rationale and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.
- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - the northwest corner was considered better to be one floor lower, but not essential;
 - if possible, the campanile feature element should be higher;
 - there may be opportunity to increase the amount of greenery on the northwest wall and reduce the amount of exposed concrete;
 - design development to reduce the blankness of the south façade.
- **Related Commentary:**

The Panel unanimously supported this application and acknowledged the lengthy process undergone by the applicant to reach this stage. The Panel found the scheme considerably improved since the rezoning and appreciated the applicant's response to the previous comments. It was thought that even more improvements could be achieved with some further small gestures.

Most Panel members thought the northwest corner should be lowered by one floor, but there was no strong consensus. One comment was that the revised height matches the symmetry of the more distant northerly neighbour. Another was that it would be more neighbourly to bring it down one floor and avoid a blank façade.

The Panel found the revised expression of the north face of the building much more respectful of the northern neighbours' courtyard and the feature wall in harmony with the landscaping of that neighbouring courtyard. There was a suggestion that the lower planter could be lowered

rather than being stepped up on the top stair. It may also be possible to move the stair, without detriment to the building, and to further articulate the taller planters to expose less of the concrete wall to the neighbours.

The Panel appreciated the retention of the yellow heritage house. It was agreed it will always be an "odd" relationship and the two scales impossible to reconcile. Panel members were satisfied that everything had been done to give it as much breathing space as possible.

The Panel liked the inclusion of the campanile tower but found to too low and too buried by the mechanical to make a major statement about the design of the building. One Panel member indicated support for an increase in height to express this element more successfully.

Some Panel members suggested further design development to the south façade which is still somewhat blank.

One Panel member thought there should be a reduction in the number of parking spaces given it is intended to be valet parking only which does not require the same aisle widths. It was suggested the various manipulations of the tower have resulted in less efficient parking.

The Panel found this to be a very successful, elegant project and it was noted that going taller in this case has made an enormous difference at no detriment to the city.

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3. Address: 100 West 49th Avenue (Langara Campus)
WORKSHOP
Use: School
Zoning: CD-1
Architect: Hancock Bruckner Eng & Wright/Brook Development Planning
Owner: Langara College
Review: First
Delegation: Jim Hancock, Laurie Schmidt, Stephen Teeple, Chris Phillips
Staff: Anita Molaro
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Brent Elliot, Project Planner, noted the City and Langara involved in a planning process to develop a policy and planning framework to guide the expansion of Langara college over the next twenty five years. The need for the process evolved from a study undertaken by Langara in which they were trying to better understand how to accommodate the potential needs for their existing student body as well as future growth. It has been determined there is need for a new replacement library, a creative arts complex, a multi use building and classrooms and an expansion to the existing gymnasium. There have been two open houses with the community and the intent is to have a policy statement drafted by the end of this year for consideration by Council early 2005.

Anita Molaro, Development Planner, described the context, noting the potential for a RAV station at 49th and Cambie. There will be a rezoning process to set the framework for the overall master plan for the campus. Four key areas for discussion with respect to the arrangement of the buildings and open space are:

1. access, circulation and linkage;
2. site plan and building arrangement and orientation;
3. landscape edges and interface and integration with the adjoining neighbourhood; and
4. open space strategy.

The architect, Stephen Teeple, presented and described three alternative layouts. Chris Phillips reviewed the landscape and the applicant team responded to questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
- Support for the core circulation diagram; it builds on what is there and it has a robustness for the future;
- There an interest in looking at opportunity for a higher civic presence on West 49th Avenue;
- Concerns about the lack of openness to the south;
- There needs to be an urban design intention about the service road, which has practical implications;
- The quality and character of the quadrangle needs to be clarified and strengthened;
- It will be very important to bring some core sustainability issues into this stage of the discussion.
- **Related Comments:**

Access/Circulation/Linkages:

- There are possibilities to enhance the civic presence on West 49th;
 - There needs to be a greater sense of where the entry is. This is definitely lacking currently and this is an opportunity to correct it;
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- Parking entries are important: Where you come up and how that relates to the master plan of the circulation;
- One negative of taking the cars in so far into the site are is that it destroys the area along that full length. I think it still could be moved further to the north to the benefit of connections to the west of the property;
- I appreciate the efficiencies of the ring road and like the effectiveness of the L-shaped corridors, one on the outside for dry weather and one on the inside for wet weather. Having these corridors so closely parallel will allow for the students to more readily move back and forth without any confusion as the weather changes. The outside corridor looks best when it's quite wide, as depicted in option A and B, but not C. The north-south corridor portion in C is too narrow;
- Langara does not present itself presently on West 49th. There is opportunity for having the creative arts building, such as in option C, present itself more into the forecourt; a visual extension of the building that doesn't necessarily have programmed area in it;
- There has to be a main entrance but there should also be a hierarchy of permeability;
- Many of the axes you are creating are working quite well. I think there should perhaps be some more to the south to the golf course, visually at least;
- You seem to be very aware that simplicity is the key in terms of establishing a very simple circulation path through the campus because right now that's where it falls down currently;
- It would be good if the internal pedestrian route could make a full loop rather than three quarters, linked across the front and at least have weather protection;
- There is a potential conflict point at the northwest corner where students would come from the RAV and intersect with the main vehicular entry into the site, so some sort of pedestrian priority treatment at this intersection is critical;
- Acknowledge the front door of the YWCA and make sure that's a strong pedestrian link across the park space;
- There is currently no street presence;
- Consider bringing the parking as part of the quad and making it more a part of the space of the campus as opposed to being hidden underneath; there are opportunities for this with the theatre, which could be sunken;
- Make the most of the golf course;
- The quality of the service road needs to be explored;
- Bikes should be in the quad for greater security;
- I am less concerned about creating an identity along 49th; a simple formal treatment of that landscape edge can satisfactorily set up the identity of the campus; Perhaps some consideration could be given to how the front of building A could be screened or modified to regularize that frontage;
- Support the idea of pulling a piece of the creative arts building forward as a pavilion in that landscape strip; there are some possibilities there;
- The biggest issue I have is the forecourt area; the building needs to engage 49th more and be more public in its nature;
- There should be some simple, strong links that reflect pedestrian desire lines.

Site planning and buildings:

- It is absolutely essential to have phasing diagrams;
- One of the advantages of option A is that you are building the edges of the quad. This is not really true in option C;
- Although a conclusion has been reached is that C is a better scheme I wouldn't necessarily come to that conclusion. There are aspects in the other options that are certainly worthy of further study;
- I don't like the placement of the library in Option C lonely because it's cutting into the corridor and it precludes as much window presence as possible, so A and B are better for the library layout;

- I would be concerned about looking at the second master plan some fifty years from now and trying to maximize existing real estate. My concern is that option C loses some real estate in the bottom left corner whereas option B is probably utilizing the real estate as best as possible. In option B the northwest could lend itself to a future fifth building, in which case maybe there should be some consideration to pushing the library even more to the left hard against the ring road and a bit further south;
- I agree with the obvious conclusion that the multi use building is the continuation of existing building B;
- Build on the quality of the theatre; there may be opportunity to tweak things to increase its visibility;
- Where is the architecture? What has been shown is somewhat just slab lots;
- I lean towards option C because it is realistic in terms of the library being the first building; trying to bring it in tight and trying to establish the language of the quadrangle;
- I would like to see the library have at least two, if not three, aspects to it;
- There needs to be a stronger relationship to the park edge next door; if you move that access point further north it would open up your planning options for the future and possibly using the park, visually at least;
- There needs to be buildings or other way finding public access components into the forecourt on 49th. Tied in with that is entry sequence and the ability to find the front door, which is critical;
- The service road should be more of a street;
- It is an opportunity missed not to put a higher building facing north that will get some views from the upper floors;
- The library is key, not only because of what it represents to a learning environment, but because you are locating the library in phase one to satisfy a current condition. However, for the longer term that condition should change and the quad reallocated or reshaped now otherwise it will be too late in later phases;
- It will work because it is not a big architectural idea but a simple planning idea which has enough strength to hold it together;
- The library has to be in the quad; it is one of the few buildings on the campus that is used by all;
- The quad brings a sense of order and formality to normalize what right now is a very random and incoherent arrangement of buildings on the site;
- I'm confident there is an approach being taken here that will ultimately create a much stronger sense of place and of an academic community. At the same time there is recognition that this is a more modestly scaled campus rather than a large university;
- I appreciate that you are considering the experiential aspects of how people will move through the complex as it develops;
- The quad is a very evocative term which suggests something finely detailed and having good control over all the edges, which you won't here. You have control over less than half the space. In the absence of a really clear strategy of how you create the quad as the heart of the campus there is a real danger of your diagram being wrong because it's not achievable;
- You may be hung up on the necessity of having the library directly related to the quad, whereas it might be more appropriate to have the arts building next to the quad;
- It's interesting that all the options have explored the quadrangle and it is a successful form for tying the buildings together;
- I have a preference for the option C, primarily because with the library being the first component to be put into place it completes and defines the quad;
- I like the idea of the library, which is a quieter more contemplative space, being able to look into the quadrangle.

Open Space:

- There are lots of opportunities for open space; it just has to have meaning. It has to mediate between the private residential edge and the public edge of the students and the college. The college could spill out into those spaces;
- Question whether the quadrangle is a semi private space, or what, and if there a way to open it up a bit for views to the south both for light and physical connection;

Sustainability:

- At this early stage more work should be done to identify opportunities for informing the scheme with building orientation and massing.