

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 9, 1998

TIME: N/A

PLACE: N/A

PRESENT: Joyce Drohan (Chair)
Patricia Campbell (not present for Items #1 and #2)
Sheldon Chandler (excused Item #3)
Per Christoffersen (excused Item #3)
Geoff Glotman (excused Item #1)
James Hancock
Sean McEwan (not present for Item #1)
Jim McLean (excused Item #3)
Norman Shearing
Peter Wreglesworth

REGRETS: Joseph Hruda
Peter Kreuk

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Carol Hubbard

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	940-990 Seymour Street
2.	955 Richards Street
3.	2079 West 42nd Avenue / 2060 West 41st Avenue
4.	990 West 41st Avenue

- 1. Address: 940-990 Seymour Street**
DA: 403485
Use: Mixed
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Preliminary
Architect: Buttjes Architecture Inc.
Owner: Wall Financial Corporation
Review: First
Delegation: Dirk Buttjes, Rob Emslie, Jane Durante
Staff: Mike Kemble/Ralph Segal

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (3-4)**Introduction:**

Mike Kemble, Development Planner, presented this application for the CD-1 site located at Nelson and Seymour Streets, having a 375 ft. frontage on Seymour. A two-tower concept was illustrated at the rezoning stage. The site was the recipient of a heritage density transfer from the former Dominion Motors site across the street and has a potential density of 6.71 FSR. A view corridor affects the site which restricts the potential height to about 230 ft. The site is also governed by the Downtown South Design Guidelines.

The proposal is for a mixed use development with commercial at grade. The residential tower contains 358 units and is 33 storeys (300 ft.) with a 6-storey streetwall component at about 70 ft. The tower width and floorplate is slightly larger than suggested by the guidelines. Vehicular access is off Seymour Street and is one-way in only. 8,000 sq.ft. of amenity space is proposed on the second floor level of the tower.

The areas in which the Panel's comments are sought relate to:

- general massing of the tower and streetwall: tower location; tower floorplate size, streetwall expression and articulation of the 6-storey element;
- architectural treatments: quality of proposed materials;
- ground level interface and vehicular access off Seymour Street;
- open space and landscaping: podium level private open space and street level public open space;
- lane interface.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

With respect to the tower location and massing, Dirk Buttjes, Architect, explained the objective was to pull it as far north as possible to avoid interference with adjacent developments. He noted that six or seven different options were explored before choosing the tower location and massing now proposed. Mr. Buttjes also reviewed the proposed access to the site, noting the difficulties posed by the one-way streets in this area. Jane Durante briefly reviewed the landscape plan.

Panel's Comments:

After reviewing the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel strongly supported the 6-storey streetwall. It was seen as a very positive contribution to Seymour Street. It works very well in this location and is a welcome change from other more token efforts that have been made in Downtown South.

The Panel's main concern related to the massing of the tower. Some Panel members felt it would have been helpful to see the rationale for the alternative tower placements that were considered in order to better understand how this particular solution was arrived at. The Panel found the grain of the tower to be overly large and suggested looking at sculpting and modelling to reduce its apparent bulk, perhaps narrowing some of its façades and notching the corners a little deeper, which might also help some of the diagonal overlook issues. While there were no major concerns expressed about the square footage, the Panel felt the corners of the floorplate need to be carefully considered. The Panel was particularly concerned about the relationship to the Dufferin Hotel. Its potential redevelopment needs to be considered and explained in the next submission, noting its potential FSR is 3.0 which is not dissimilar to the existing hotel. The layout of the suites seems to be reasonably well worked out.

The Panel had no major concerns about the architectural treatment at this stage, and the clarity of the expression was seen as a welcome initiative. One suggestion was made to add some more colour.

There was mixed response to the proposed curved walkways. There was a suggestion to investigate their workability and a strong call for the provision of adequate weather protection. One Panel member thought they would not be successful in our climate, especially since they will always be in shade in the location proposed. In any event, the applicant was encouraged to look at this very closely and, if the walkways are pursued at the next stage, to clearly articulate how they will work.

The Panel thought the landscaping had been handled quite well. There was a recommendation to increase the amount of outdoor amenity space although achieving more was recognized to be a challenge. It was suggested that the possibilities for greening some of the upper levels of the tower be considered.

There was strong support for the vehicular access off Seymour Street. It not only eases the access off the one-way street but also helps to reinforce the front entry to the residential tower, noting that some of the Downtown South lane accesses have been somewhat contrived. It facilitates access to the underground parking, and is also appropriate for a potential "big box" retail user on the ground level.

There were a number of concerns expressed about the retail space and the desire to see the end user being one that really contributes to the vitality and richness of the street experience. A food store certainly has this potential, but another large office supply store would be counter to the goals for Downtown South.

The Panel agreed that the lane treatment is rather harsh, notwithstanding the generous setback of the adjacent property. It was therefore recommended that the 20 ft. concrete wall be softened and further articulated.

2. Address: 955 Richards Street

DA: 402919

Use: Mixed (16 s - 97 units; 26 s - 173 units; townhouses: 4 s, 20 units)

Zoning: DD

Application Status: Complete after Preliminary

Architect: Rafii Architects/Brook Development Planning

Owner: Bosa Ventures Inc.

Review: Second

Delegation: Chuck Brook, Andre Chilcott, Foad Rafii, Jane Durante

Staff: Mike Kemble

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-1)**Introduction:**

Mike Kemble, Development Planner, presented this complete application. The Panel had not supported the preliminary submission in January 1998. It was subsequently approved in principle by the Development Permit Board, subject to a number of conditions which addressed the Panel's concerns. The Panel supported the basic two-tower configuration on the site but had concerns about the strength of the base podium treatment, the open space at the north end of the site, and the multiplicity of styles in the tower expression. In addition to the response to previous concerns, the Panel's advice is sought on the townhouse expression and treatment of the porte cochère area, the tower massing and architectural character, and open space treatments.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Chuck Brook offered to respond to questions, and Foad Rafii briefly described the proposed courtyard.

Panels Comments

The Panel reviewed the models and posted drawings and provided the following comments:

The Panel strongly supported this application and appreciated the efforts made to respond to the Panel's previous comments.

The Panel thought there had been considerable improvement in the townhouse expression. The applicant was commended on the richness of the façade and for having pulled it much closer to the street. There was some concern, however, that the townhouses might now be over-articulated, with deeper than necessary recesses. It was suggested that the upper storeys of the middle section could easily be simplified without compromising the project in any way. One Panel member also found some confusion in the relationship of the townhouse elements to the lower cornice lines of the tower.

The Panel had a number of comments about the architectural expression. The use of stone was strongly supported, and in general it was felt that the more consistent language of the project gives it a much stronger identity. Several Panel members felt strongly that the upper cornice line on the larger tower should be given a more subtle expression to delineate the change from 8 to 6 units per floor. It was also felt there was too great a contrast between the robust concrete expression and some of the lighter elements on the building. A little massaging should be able to bring these together more comfortably. Some Panel members were also concerned about the tops of the towers which have a markedly different scale and vocabulary than the street level expression. It was strongly recommended that a more subtle way of expressing the temple-like top be found. While it may be a successful marketing tool it seems architecturally incongruous in Vancouver. More work is also needed on the rather awkward larger openings at the top of the building. It was noted that the horizontal lines drawn across the balconies of the previous scheme

helped to address this situation better. One Panel member was also concerned about the appearance of the palladian type cap when viewed from the north-south direction.

Some Panel members cautioned that it may not be easy to achieve a consistent, high quality finish on the concrete, especially if it is stained concrete which can be very difficult to control in the long term. However, if the construction technique is successful it will be far superior to a similar building rendered in stucco.

There was mixed response regarding the landscaped roof deck and whether to extend it over the lane entry. Some Panel members thought it would benefit from having it extended, to provide a greater amenity for the residents; others preferred it left open to allow as much light as possible onto the walkway below. Careful landscaping around the ramp entrance was recommended. The Panel shared the Planning Department's concerns about the security of the northwest courtyard. Lighting will be critical in this space.

Finally, a concern was expressed about the very steep stair up from Richards Street.

Applicant's Response:

With respect to the courtyard security, Mr. Rafii explained there is a 4 -5 ft. concrete wall on top of which is a 4 ft. fence, so from the lane there is about 8 ft. vertical separation. As well, the landscape drawings indicate extensive lighting in this area. Although not a sunny area, the shadow analysis shows the courtyard will receive partial sun at certain times of the day. With respect to the stair, Mr. Rafii explained there are three ramps with interval landings between, one of which is gated. With respect to the concrete, Andre Chilcott said they are confident the finish will be superior, in keeping with other Bosa projects.

3. Address: 2079 WEST 42ND AVENUE/2060 WEST 41ST AVENUE

Address: 2079 West 42nd Ave (current London Drugs)

2060 West 41st Ave (current liquor store/parking lot)

DA: 402626/402442

Use: Mixed (4 and 5 storeys, 59 units)

Zoning: C-2

Application Status: Complete after Preliminary

Architect: Chandler and Associates

Owner: London Drugs

Review: Second

Delegation: Sheldon Chandler, Jim McLean, Chris Phillips

Staff: Bob Adair

EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (3-4)**Introduction:**

Bob Adair, Development Planner, presented this application. The preliminary scheme was supported by the Panel in October 1997 and it was subsequently approved in principle by the Development Permit Board in January 1998. Mr. Adair briefly reviewed the proposal and the revisions that have taken place since the preliminary stage. In summary, the applicant has satisfied most of the conditions of the preliminary approval. Outstanding issue relates to the width of the pedestrian walkway and the amount of cover, and the rear setback of the 42nd Avenue component. After reviewing the revised scheme, Mr. Adair noted that Planning is concerned that there has been a decrease in the overall quality of the proposal since the preliminary submission, in particular with respect to the expression of the 42nd Avenue component which is considered less responsive to the single family homes across the street.

(It was noted the posted drawings were from the July submission although the differences from the more recent material are not significant. The latest drawings, which are to a greater level of detail, were included in reduced form in the agenda package.)

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Sheldon Chandler, Architect, explained that the Development Permit Board requirement to reduce the height at the corner of West 42nd and East Boulevard resulted in a loss of up to 40,000 sq.ft., requiring a redistribution of floor area. He briefly reviewed the revised scheme, noting they have tried to maintain the planning principles and qualities of the former proposal.

Panels Comments:

Sheldon Chandler, Architect, explained that the Development Permit Board requirement to reduce the height at the corner of West 42nd and East Boulevard resulted in a loss of up to 40,000 sq.ft., requiring a redistribution of floor area. He briefly reviewed the revised scheme, noting they have tried to maintain the planning principles and qualities of the former proposal.

Panel's Comments: After reviewing the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel found it difficult to assess this project because of the considerable changes that have occurred in its configuration and character since the preliminary stage. Some Panel members thought it was regrettable if these changes are solely the result of the need to reduce the height. In general, the Panel thought it lacked the strength of the previous scheme in terms of character.

The Panel supported the improved open space and thought it promised to provide some unique pedestrian connections for this neighbourhood.

The building at the corner of 42nd and East Boulevard was considered to be quite successful, having a strong character and identity. There was a caution about the curved roof and the need to consider the number of mechanical penetrations that could detract from its appearance.

The Panel's main concern related to the townhouses where it was felt there had been a reduction in the quality of the architecture. They are overly repetitive and too fine grained, making a much more difficult transition between them and large scale expression of the podium. A wider, modular treatment of these façades would be a more complementary expression to the RS-1 context across the street. The Panel thought the courtyard of the townhouses would work very well.

There was a concern expressed about the access to the single storey units in the easterly block and the undesirable recessed areas that will result at the ground plane. It was suggested consideration be given to reversing these units to have the single storey at the bottom and the double storey on top.

The Panel thought the pedestrian walkway off 42nd Avenue was more dynamic than previously, much improved by widening and improved landscaping. It is much less successful at the 41st Avenue side where the cutaway at 41st compromises the commercial building façade. It was suggested pulling the façade back to the street if at all possible. There were mixed views about the acceptability of the height of the covered portion of the walkway, with the majority believing it to be too restrictive as proposed. Proper lighting in the walkway will be critical in terms of security. There was also a suggestion to consider the potential for a commercial arcade shared with a future neighbour to the east at the lane.

The large, solid area on the London Drugs façade was a concern to the Panel. Given the context of this project it was felt that at the very least there needs to be display windows or something to give more vitality to the street.

The Panel thought the loading area needed further study, with a clear demonstration of adequate turning radius.

One comment about the lane setback was that it does not appear to adversely affect the neighbouring developments as proposed.

The Panel did not support the application at this time. It was noted that the issue is not one of quality but rather of scale, largely in the townhouses.

Applicant's Response:

Mr. Chandler said they will be able to respond to the comments about the grain and texture of the townhouses. He explained the difference in height was from the previous 55 ft. to 40 ft., which has been a major factor. Loading and manoeuvrability issues are being addressed by their engineering consultants. The carving of the 41st Avenue building was a requirement of the preliminary approval. With respect to the blank wall on the London Drugs façade, he said they were considering making this a quiet area with some seating and treating the wall with articulated brick.

4. Address: 990 WEST 41ST AVENUE

Use: Mixed Institutional and Residential (5 storeys)

Zoning: RS-1 to CD-1

Application Status: Rezoning

Architect: Urban Design Group Arch.

Owner: Lubavitch

Review: Second

Delegation: Roger Moors, Paul Chiu, Jim Lehto, Margot Long

Staff: Rob Whitlock

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (9-0)**Introduction:**

Rob Whitlock, Rezoning Planner, presented this rezoning application. The Panel did not support the application when it was reviewed in July 1998. The Panel supported the proposed use and density. Mr. Whitlock briefly reviewed the Panel's earlier concerns which largely arose out of the applicant's desire at that time to maintain the same floor-to-floor heights for both the residential and commercial components of the development. There is now a clear separation of the institutional from the residential use. As well, the symmetry has been broken down along 41st Avenue and there is now more of an architectural feature at the corner. In general, Planning staff believe the scheme is now working much better. The Panel's comments are sought on how the previous concerns have been addressed, and on the appropriateness of the proposed height at the corner.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Roger Moors, United Properties, noted the response to the Panel's earlier concern about the need to make a statement at the corner. It also blends architecturally with the Jewish Community Centre. Margot Long, Landscape Architect, reviewed the results of an arborist's report on the trees on the site.

Panels Comments:

After reviewing the model and posted drawings, the Panel commented as follows:

The Panel unanimously supported this rezoning application. The Panel strongly supported the proposed height which helps to strengthen and articulate this important corner. It was felt the additional height at the corner improves the urban design of the project. The Panel generally found the response to its previous comments had been satisfactorily addressed, noting that the remaining issues can be dealt at the development application stage.

As the project is refined, the Panel thought more attention should be given to the corner building and the integration of the curtainwall with the stepping element. Further consideration should also be given to the relationship of the corner building to the Jewish Community Centre and with the residential component.

The depth of the recesses in the residential building, which create an overly complex façade along Oak Street, remained of concern to the Panel. It was stressed that this will need to be addressed at the next stage of the design.

The landscaping was seen as quite a positive contribution to Oak Street, with one suggestion to consider some recognition for the trees that will be lost.

A recommendation was made to integrate the existing sign board into the overall design at the appropriate time.

Applicant's Response:

Mr. Moors said the existing message board is intended to be incorporated into the canopy of the entrance. Mr. Chui thanked the Panel for its support for the additional height at the corner.