

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 23, 2009

TIME: 4.00 pm

PLACE: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:
Martin Nielsen, Chair (Excused Item #3)
Gerry Eckford
David Godin
Bruce Haden (Item #1 & 2)
Oliver Lang
Steve McFarlane
Vladimir Mikler (Excused Item #3)
Maurice Pez, Chair (Item #3)
Douglas Watts

REGRETS:
Jane Durante
Richard Henry
Mark Ostry

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lorna Harvey

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING	
1.	1190 West 6 th Avenue
2.	2250 Commercial Drive
3.	5100 Oak Street (VanDusen Gardens)

BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Nielsen 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: 1190 West 6th Avenue
DE: 413078
Description: To construct a multiple dwelling building with 12 units.
Zoning: FM-1
Application Status: Complete
Review: First
Owner: Multi Point Enterprises Ltd.
Architect: Matthew Cheng Architect
Delegation: Matthew Cheng, Matthew Cheng Architect
Mary Chan Yip, DMG Landscape Architects
Staff: Dale Morgan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Dale Morgan, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for three-storey, twelve-unit multiple dwelling building. The existing building is to be demolished and the four existing rental suites need to be replaced in the new development and their continued rental use secured with a City Housing Agreement. Mr. Morgan described the policy for Fairview Slopes and the FM-1 District Schedule. He noted that the intent is to enhance the small scale residential character of the Fairview Slopes and new buildings should respect existing views. Mr. Morgan noted that the top floor will be set back to provide open space to enhance view amenity. The site is located on the north-east corner of Alder Street and West 6th Avenue. It is a very narrow site with a twenty foot grade change. The proposal will have six two-storey, two bedroom units and six studios. The two bedroom units face the street and the studio entrances are accessed from an interior side yard or the rear of the building. The parking is accessed from West 6th Avenue and an elevator and stair well lead to the courtyard mid site. Loading and garbage collection will be off the lane.

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

- The general form of development;
- On site circulation;
- Privacy and general livability;
- Materials and expression; and
- Public realm interface.

Mr. Morgan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Matthew Cheng, Architect, further described the proposal noting that there is a covenant with the neighbours as they are providing one loading space for the neighbour and three parking spaces.

Mary Chan Yip, Landscape Architect, noted the street fronting units off Alder Street and the landscaped space for the studio units. Also because of the grade that transitions down Alder Street, the spaces are stepped down and are planted to provide a privacy screen from the street. There are new street trees proposed along Alder Street and West 6th Avenue to make for a more friendly connection in the public realm.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Design development to improve the usability of the courtyard and its relationship to the larger suites and the neighbouring site;
 - Extend the elevator to the courtyard level;
 - Support for additional height beyond the height envelope to enable roof top access to the south end unit;
 - Improve the issue of overlook and privacy between the units and on site circulation;
 - Design development regarding CPTED issues concerning restricting access to the courtyard;
 - Design development the north façade facing West 6th Avenue;
 - Support for not requiring on site circulation from the parking area to the suites; and
 - Consider providing less parking to reduce on site excavation
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the form of development and thought it was a handsome and modest proposal.

The Panel thought the project integrated well into the neighbourhood and they thought it was nicely proportioned and that the proposed material palette worked well. There was clarification requested on the proposed colours palette, with the panel expressing a preference for the white paneling over beige. Most of the Panel thought the onsite circulation worked but they also thought something needed to be done to enhance the overall success of the courtyard. Several Panel members suggested the applicant look at the relationship between the circulation and the rear courtyard and the adjacent courtyard as they should be working in harmony especially since they will share the parking area. A couple of Panel members suggested improving the courtyard to make it more of an outdoor room and opening it up to the lower floor units. One Panel member suggested gating the courtyard at either end for security reasons. Regarding the circulation, the Panel agreed that it was not necessary to require on-site access from the units to the parking area. Adhering to this typical city requirement would have a detrimental affect on liveability and security because it would involve replacing the proposed landscaping and privacy buffer with secondary circulation.

The Panel also had some concerns with the studios as they thought there could be some CPTED issues since there aren't any windows onto the alley. They also thought it was a bit confusing that the access to the upper two storeys was adjacent to the lower storey rather than the other way around. If that can't be changed, then there needs to be a clear distinction between the pathway and the studio units. One Panel member agreed with the landscape architect's notion that the front patio areas were really areas that could be useable patio space as a way to provide privacy between the access to the upper two storeys and the window of the studio unit.

Several Panel members suggested the applicant pursue a relaxation for more height to the building as they were concerned with the top two units. They thought with more height especially on the south end units there could be roof access.

The Panel supported the general livability of the units and thought the material and expression were appropriate. However, the Panel thought that the north elevation needed more work at the street level as well as at the upper level since it is facing West 6th Avenue. One Panel member suggested adding lights or windows in the stair well. Several Panel members noted that the windows on the south façade seemed a little small.

Most of the Panel thought the landscaping on Alder Street would help soften the way the building meets the ground. They noted that the public interface and how it was treated would be an important part of the architectural landscape expression. A couple of Panel members had concerns with the viability of the street trees.

One Panel member suggested the applicant could cluster the washroom stacks as a way to lower the construction costs and which would also allow the windows to be moved further down the slope on the south side. The applicant was encouraged to look for ways to add sustainable elements to the project.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Cheng said he appreciated all the comments from the Panel.

2. Address:	2250 Commercial Drive
DE:	Rezoning
Description:	To permit the partial demolition and rebuilding of the existing 3-storey retail and office building and its conversion to a mixed-use building with a commercial ground floor and 4 residential floors above.
Zoning:	C2-C to CD-1
Application Status:	RZ
Review:	First
Architect:	Ankenman Marchand Architects
Delegation:	Tim Ankenman, Ankenman Marchand Architects Mary Chan Yip, DMG Landscape Architects
Staff:	Ian Cooper/Ann McLean

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-1)

- **Introduction:** Ian Cooper, Rezoning Planner, reviewed the policy for the C2-C zoning. The intent of the guidelines is to provide housing above grade and to ensure a high standard of livability. He also noted that the EcoDensity Charter advocates for an increased density and walkable shopping area as well as increased livability. He added that there is a challenge with the relationship at the rear of the building.

Ann McLean, Development Planner, noted that the site is located at the northeast corner of Commercial Drive and East 7th Avenue. She described the context for the area noting that most of the sites are underdeveloped or empty. The proposal is for the renovation of an existing building that has eight commercial/retail units at grade. The 58 units above grade will include twenty-four 2-bedroom units and 34 studio or 1-bedroom units. The new upper level will contain 2-storey units. The new fourth and fifth storeys are set back from the street façade and will produce a reduced shadow impact on Commercial Drive. The lane elevation has been significantly revised. The existing walls of the second and third floors will be demolished and rebuilt 15 feet to the west creating a roof deck with access for the second floor dwelling units. Ms. McLean noted that as the proposal is a rezoning it will be required to achieve LEED™ Silver.

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

- Does the proposed form of development achieve the additional height and adequate regard to compatibility with the adjacent residential zone?
- Do the proposed units meet the area's objective to have a variety of housing, livability, specifically with regard to the interior bedrooms?

Mr. Cooper and Ms. McLean took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Tim Ankenman, Architect, said that originally the owner was looking at rezoning the site in order to build a tower. However, towers are not in the zoning guidelines for the area and so only a 4-storey building could be built on the site so the owner decided to look at renovating the existing structure. Mr. Ankenman noted that they will be keeping about 95% of the building. The existing commercial is on a small scale but they are looking at how the store fronts could be individualized and improved. They are also looking at improving the corner element as it has a corporate feel at the moment. Noting that staff has some concerns with the inboard bedrooms, Mr. Ankenman stated that because of the ceiling height he thought they would be able to make them livable. He added that a number of heritage buildings have similar suite layouts. Mr.

Ankenman also noted that they had removed the colonnade and had pulled the store fronts further out onto the sidewalk. The parking ramp is a problem area so they will be adding a living green wall along the lane and bringing the gate up to the property line.

Mary Chan Yip, Landscape Architect, noted that the proposed small scale trees and shrub planting on the terraces to allow the individual homes some privacy and to allow the residents' overlook in the neighbouring buildings to the east to have a garden effect. A series of garden walls is proposed on the lane level with planters on level 2 through 4 to give a more terraced garden effect. Planters are planned along the west side facing Commercial Drive and the streetscape will be improved to enhance the outdoor activity spaces facing the street.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Consider increasing the weather protection along Commercial Drive;
 - Consider more patio space on the sidewalks for coffee shops and restaurants;
 - Design development to the barrel element at the corner; and
 - Consider an indoor/outdoor amenity space.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel supported the proposal as well as the height, density and massing.

The Panel thought this was an important project and wanted to review the project again at the permit stage. They commended the team and the client for choosing to retain the building. There were mixed feelings about the loss of the theatre and office space with one Panel member asking if some office space could be incorporated into the design to maximize the location. One Panel member noted that the theatre was an important civic amenity and hoped that amenity could be replaced; an element that gives back to the community.

The Panel supported the height of the building with several Panel members suggesting it could go higher noting that the building is beside the busiest transit hub in the city. There was some concern for the livability of the bedroom space but the Panel thought there was a strong case to be made for design because of the floor to ceiling height.

The Panel thought there was a lot that needed to be done with the street noting that weather protection needed to be increased for the rainy months. They thought there was a challenge regarding the colonnades with possible CPTED issues. Since the columns can't be removed, it was suggested that more space be provided on the sidewalk for patios and to add variation and rhythm to the street. One Panel member suggested adding a mural for to the façade that can be seen from the SkyTrain to make it a genuine gateway to Commercial Drive. Several Panel members suggested the applicant work with the retail tenants to get some feedback as to how they would like to see their store fronts. They thought it was important to have the individual owners be able to modify their shops. Several Panel members thought the barrel element on the corner was worth rethinking in order to make the building more residential and less commercial. The Panel felt it was important that the building have more of the Commercial Street feel.

The Panel liked the exposed circular stairway and thought if it was properly detailed would be very interesting. A couple of Panel members thought the proposal needed an amenity space and suggested the applicant consider the second level adjacent to the podium facing east for an indoor/outdoor amenity.

Regarding sustainability, one Panel member suggested the applicant consider a mechanical solution that integrates the retail with the residential for maximum energy efficiency and to reduce the amount of glazing along Commercial Drive. Reducing the glazing will help the building look less like an office building and will also contribute to a better energy performance. One Panel member noted that there wasn't any material regarding parking and thought that because of the location and the SkyTrain Station, the parking could be reduced.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Ankenman thanked the Panel and stated that they had supplied some great ideas. He noted that about half of the tenants that are currently in the building are planning to stay. He thought it was a great idea to sit down with them to solve how they articulate the storefronts. He added that he appreciated the feedback regarding the corner element on the building and looked forward to coming back to the Panel at the DP stage.

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3. Address: 5100 Oak Street (VanDusen Gardens)
DE: 413240
Description: To construct a new visitor centre, with a new vehicle entrance on Oak Street.
Zoning: CD-1
Application Status: Complete
Review: First
Owner: Vancouver Board of Parks
Architect: Busby Perkins + Will
Delegation: Jim Hoffman, Busby Perkins + Will
Bruce Gauthier, Sharp & Diamond Inc.
Danica Djurkovic, Vancouver Board of Parks
Staff: Marie Linehan
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EVALUATION: SUPPORT (3-2)

- **Introduction:** Marie Linehan, Development Planner, introduced the proposal for a new visitor centre at VanDusen Gardens located north-east of the existing centre and as well the renovations to the existing structures on site. Ms. Linehan described the context for the surrounding area noting that it is mostly single family. The existing visitor centre is accessed from West 37th Avenue and contains a garden shop, restaurant and as well the principle entry to the garden. There is a covered walkway connecting the visitor centre to the floral hall and the administration wing. In terms of renovations, the existing building will maintain the restaurant use and the floral hall will be renovated as an open air structure. The administrative wing will be moved into the existing visitor centre. The covered walkway will be removed to allow for access to the visitors centre and for an improved entry sequence from the parking lot to the new visitor centre including a pedestrian bridge over the existing ravine. The relocation of the visitor centre is to provide improved presence and visibility and to allow direct vehicular access from Oak Street. The existing parking lot will be maintained but will be re-stripped to add 16 more parking spaces.

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

- To provide comments on the overall design, with particular regard to the building location and siting rationale.

Ms. Linehan took questions from the Panel.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Jim Hoffman, Architect, further described the proposal and noted that VanDusen Gardens used to be a Shaughnessy golf club up until the late 1960's. The existing buildings were built in 1973. He added that they did look at refurbishing the buildings, however it will be more cost effective to build new structures rather than renovate. The project will be phased and the existing facilities will remain open during the construction. The Park Board requested the visitor center be more noticeable from Oak Street. Mr. Hoffman described the impact on the landscaping that will occur to construct the new facility and that the staff parking will be relocated near the works yard. Mr. Hoffman noted that the current visitor facility is used for children and adults, volunteers and restaurant patrons. He also described the uses planned for the new facility.

Bruce Gauthier, Landscape Architect, noted that one of the key site issues was how to use the plaza spaces to bring all the different traffic flows throughout the park together. He further described the traffic flows noting how many paths go through the park. He also noted that the plaza is an important gathering place. Mr. Gauthier stated that they wanted to preserve as much of the important vegetation as possible noting that they had some significant grading constraints and a new building to deal with. The stream is overgrown right now, but will be cleaned up and regraded. Mr. Gauthier described the plant palette selection for the site including the green roof.

The applicant team took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - design development to improve relationships between functional space planning and complex roof forms above;
 - Design development on the arrival sequence;
 - Design development regarding the guard rails on the roof.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel approved the proposal noting that it was an exciting project.

The Panel thought VanDusen Gardens deserves a building that was of the landscape and thought it would be a great addition to the gardens and the city. They thought the design was stunning but struggled with the information package as they thought a lot of detail information was missing especially regarding the landscaping plans. The Panel agreed that in terms of meeting the rationale of the organic reference to the orchid, and following that through in the form of the building, the design was very successful. The Panel thought the roof line created a dramatic space that maybe didn't really work well with the functionality of the spaces beneath it. They thought the internal organization could work a bit better on how people will move through the building. A couple of Panel members also thought the spaces seem rudimentary and didn't seem to benefit from the strategy of the roof.

Several Panel members thought it was critical to get the relationship with the street right and to use other forms to announce the building. It was suggested that more attention be brought to the Oak Street side of the building. They had some concerns with the arrival sequence noting that visitors will have to park off West 37th Avenue and they thought the way finding to the visitor's centre was a little confusing.

A couple of Panel members thought the building should be closer to the lake so that visitors could enjoy the view from inside the building and restaurant.

Regarding sustainability, some Panel members thought the potable water should be retained for irrigation. One Panel member commented that perhaps the water capture for irrigation didn't meet 100% of the LEED™ points and that it appeared that it could. Several Panel members thought the formal complexity would work to achieve a sustainable aspect. However, they thought the building but would achieve a higher level of sustainability had there been a stronger rationale for the form of the building rather than an organic rationale.

The Panel was concerned that the design might not be achievable noting that it will require a high degree of materiality and detailing as well as a high level of costs. They thought there would be a lot of challenges in producing a building of this quality and design and hoped that the money could be found to build the centre.

- **Applicant's Response:** Mr. Hoffman thanked the Panel for their comments. He noted that there is a bigger package available with the landscape plans adding that Parks is responsible for the landscaping and the application is only for the building. He noted that there are some concerns with the Oak Street frontage regarding signage which hasn't been addressed in this application. They have done some design sketches but haven't gotten too far as yet. He added that there are a lot of cedar trees that are dense and make the area dark and some of those cedars will be taken out so the street will be dramatically different. Regarding the arrival sequence, Mr. Hoffman noted that they looked at having a drop off near the parking lot but can't afford to implement that in this application at this time. As the site use to be a golf course, it would cost a fortune to change the irrigation system. The system is currently not working and there is an old tank at the top of the site that hasn't been used in years. A new pipe will be put in to utilize that water storage which will allow for three to four weeks of water and then the city water will be need to be used for irrigation. Mr. Hoffman noted that the plaza deck is the right size. There are daily classrooms and large events with tents that will be set up there. Mr. Hoffman also noted that they had not found a solution to the guard rails for the roof. Regarding the budget, Mr. Hoffman noted that they are going through the process of hiring a construction manager and will not be taking the project to the next level until they are assured of the money. They have done a cost estimate and there are a number of contractors on their short list. Mr. Hoffman noted that the shape of the building has a lot to do with the shape of the gardens and is appropriate for its use.

Ms. Djurkovic said the Park Board was delighted that the building will be constructed.

Adjournment

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