

NEW WESTMINSTER DESIGN PANEL

Tuesday, February 23, 2016 3:00 p.m.
Committee Room No. 2

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Meredith Mitchell	- Chair, BC Society of Landscape Architects
David Roppel	- Vice Chair, Development Industry Representative (UDI)
Donald Andrew	- AIBC Representative (arrived at 3:02)
Maranatha Coulas	- Architectural Institute of BC
Maria Fish	- BC Society of Landscape Architects
Rodney Maas	- Architectural Institute of BC

REGRETS:

Robert Duke	- AIBC Representative
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GUESTS:

Derek Lee	- PWL Landscape Architects
Anna Babicz	- PWL Landscape Architects
Kevin King	- Dialog Design

STAFF:

Rupinder Basi	- Senior Development Planner
Erika Mashig	- Parks and Open Space Planner
Debbie Johnstone	- Committee Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m.

1.0 ANNUAL HOUSEKEEPING

1.1 Orientation Package

Debbie Johnstone, Committee Clerk, reviewed the following documents with the Committee members:

- Social Media Policy;
- Terms of Reference; and,
- Permission Forms.

Panel Members are to contact Nick Hardy, Planning Assistant, regarding attendance at each meeting. If a member is unable to fulfill their duties, they are asked to notify the Legislative Services Department so the position can be refilled.

1.2 Oaths of Office

Debbie Johnstone, Committee Clerk, administered the Oath of Office to the Committee members.

1.3 Selection of Chair and Vice Chair for 2016

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT Meredith Mitchell be selected as the Chair for the 2016 New Westminster Design Panel term.

CARRIED.

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT David Ropell be selected as the Vice- Chair for the 2016 New Westminster Design Panel term.

CARRIED.

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

2.0 ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions.

3.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Adoption of the Minutes of January 19th, 2016

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the minutes of the January 19th, 2016 New Westminster Design Panel be adopted with the following change:

- *That the bullet point on Item 4.1 on page 4 read:
“It was suggested that rather than taxus, a plant allowing for more light, such as a deciduous shrub be considered along Ewan Avenue;”*

CARRIED.

All members of the Panel present voted in favour of the motion.

4.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

There were no items.

5.0 DESIGN REVIEWS

5.1 New Westminster Downtown Public Realm and Architectural Guidelines

Rupinder Basi, Senior Development Planner, and Erika Mashig, Parks and Open Space Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the initial draft of the proposed Downtown Building and Public Realm design guidelines. Mr. Basi and Ms. Mashig requested feedback from the Panel with regard to the five questions for consideration included in the agenda package.

Kevin King, Dialog, Derek Lee, PWL Partnership, and Anna Babicz, PWL Partnership, provided a PowerPoint presentation with regard to the Downtown Masterplan.

Following questions from the Panel, Mr. Basi and Ms. Mashig provided the following information:

- The design guidelines document would be made available to all developers working in the Downtown area;
- The document would be architecturally specific to each precinct in New Westminster;
- A menu could be implemented to direct developers to relevant sections of the document based on their project location;
- The number of privately owned public spaces in the City would be evaluated and the scale of development would be examined to see if the appropriate expansion is being applied;
- Both the City's Envision 2032 and Public Art Policy would be integrated into a finalized version of the document;
- Implementation of these guidelines would require interdepartmental assistance, and could offer opportunities for the City to partner with different organizations; and,
- The priority for implementation would take direction from Mayor and Council, but it was suggested that East Columbia Street, 6th Street and the waterfront area could be targeted first.

Mr. Basi and Ms. Mashig directed the Panel to assist with the review of the guidelines and asked for their input on the following questions:

One of the main objectives of the toolkit is to provide a consistent framework for urban public realm improvements and architectural design as it relates to creating good urban design throughout the downtown. The complimentary masterplan further supports the toolkit, identifying potential locations for implementing public realm interventions that vary in scale and function, as a mechanism for apportioning public/private funding to specific projects. In the opinion of the panel, does the structure of the document and illustrations achieve this objective?

- The structure of the document is effective and clear;
- Pairing the guidelines with a tool kit and master plan could promote a better understanding for the reader;
- The format of the document could require additional attention and proof reading;
- A checklist could be utilized in the document to ensure that important criteria are met by developers;
- The chart in the first section of the guidelines could be carried through to the second portion of the document;
- Graphical vignettes could be incorporated throughout the entire document;
- The rough drawings used in the guidelines allow for artistic interpretation from developers;
- The document could benefit from braiding, as it is very two-dimensional in its current form;
- Topography could be better addressed throughout the guidelines;
- Information regarding how this policy would be implemented, and how to follow through with staff could be noted in the guidelines; and,
- Providing recommendations rather than requirements was suggested to ensure that developers have room for creativity in their design process.

The document outlines general foundational architectural and public realm guidelines and, in subsequent sections, provides specific guidelines for each of the four precincts in the Downtown. Do these two sets of guidelines work together to ensure the built environment positively affects the experience of people in the public realm, including the relationship between public and private space, massing of adjacent buildings and frontages?

- The document provides a consistent framework and the guidelines work well together;
- The relationship between public and private space is clear;

- Possible issues with accessibility to privately owned public accessible spaces (POPS) were expressed. It was suggested that when promoting the public to use private space, accessibility factors may not be to code;
- Ramps could be labeled in the document as being to British Columbia building code, rather than stating that they would be at a 5% grade;
- Several areas that are designated for parks are situated on the incline of the hill. Challenges in accessing these areas may be experienced by those with mobility issues;
- The guidelines provide a good model for residents' privacy in the downtown area; however, it was suggested that alternative options could also be considered;
- Indicating that parking garages be implemented underground may not be possible in certain areas of New Westminster;
- The integration of parking garages may require further clarification on busy roads, such as Columbia Street;
- Issues regarding transit could be better illustrated throughout the document. Areas like Columbia Street, with a large amount of transit stops, may require further guidelines;
- The area surrounding the SkyTrain could require additional consideration and further guidelines. Enquiries were made on how this area fits into the vision for New Westminster; and,
- Because of the size of the tool kit, it was suggested that the document clearly identify a few key items that are the most important for developers to follow.

The intent of the guidelines and toolkit are to inspire a high quality architectural design and public realm and not to discourage personal expression or limit design creativity. In the opinion of panel, do the guidelines and toolkit allow for creative expression?

- Overall, the document allows for creative expression; however, there are a few elements that could be reviewed so as to not become too prescriptive;
- The materials suggested for all four precincts are very similar. It was suggested that an emphasis be placed more on quality and durability rather than prescribing specific materials;
- In the Historical Precinct, setbacks between the vertical additions suggest a break between the old and new buildings. Information regarding the intent of this design was requested;
- The 30 meter minimum requirement for setback from tower to tower in the waterfront area could be evaluated on a case by case basis;
- Providing a guideline for a setback for residential privacy may be too restrictive. Additional clarity regarding the reasoning for this guideline was requested to be included in the document;

- It was suggested that the guidelines for the interfacing of townhouse complexes are too restrictive. Builders and developers could still obtain a similar goal following a less rigid guideline;
- Building to the property line may not be the only use for ground space for residential buildings; and,
- Suggesting that low cost materials be utilized may attribute to issues with quality.

Respective of each area of expertise represented on the panel (i.e. sustainability, urban design, landscape architecture, architecture, engineering), do the proposed guidelines and toolkit adequately balance scale, character and function of buildings and the public realm?

- Overall, the details and characters from the different precincts was supported by the Panel;
- The guidelines could provide additional information regarding massing in the separate precincts;
- If the intent is to have primary frontages similar to secondary frontages, an additional explanation was suggested;
- Underground parking and ramps could be dependent on the site in which they are being implemented;
- Additional clarity regarding Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS) was suggested;
- The topography of New Westminster could be a constraint; however, implementing resting points in areas of incline could provide a unique opportunity for the public;
- It was suggested that the document could indicate how the urban elements factor into the topography of the area;
- Grading could be better illustrated throughout the document, and may require further consideration;
- Issues surrounding storm water and sustainability could be better considered in the guidelines; and,
- When providing references for irrigation, it was suggested that the document site the ‘current edition’ of the document, rather than a specific edition to keep information relevant.

5.0 NEW BUSINESS

There were no items.

6.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no items.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

8.0 NEXT MEETING

March 22, 2016 (in Committee Room No. 2)

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

ON MOTION, the meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

Certified Correct,

Meredith Mitchell
Chair

Debbie Johnstone
Committee Clerk