

Date: June 22, 2026

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Place: MS Teams

PRESENT:

Board Members:

Michelle Au, Director, Permitting Services, Development, Building and Licensing (Chair)
Corrie Okell, General Manager, Development, Buildings, and Licensing
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services
Matt Shillito, Director of Special Projects Planning, Urban Design, and Sustainability

Advisory Panel:

Tony Osborn, Representative of Urban Design Panel
Alex Putrenko, Representative of Development Industry
Arno Matis, Representative of Design Professions
Hitesh Neb, Representative of General Public
Sam Ibrahim, Representative of General Public
Winki Tam, Representative of General Public

1. 80 Powell Street (COMPLETE APPLICATION) DP-2025-00672 – – HA-2

Delegation:

James Wu, Rositch Hemphill Architects
Joseph Fry, Hapa Collaborative

City Staff:

M. So, Development Review Branch, Permitting Services
D. Cha, PDS Urban Design & Development Planning
M. Shah, Permitting Services, Development, Building and Licensing
C. Fong, Development Services, Development, Building and Licensing
E. Sabadlan, PDS Urban Design & Development Planning – Heritage
B. Lee, PDS Urban Design & Development planning - Landscape
D. Lee, Engineering Services

Recording Staff:

W. Wang

2. MINUTES APPROVED

It was moved by Corrie Okell and seconded by Lon LaClaire and was the decision of the Board to approve May 11, 2026 meeting minutes for 601 W Cordova St.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None

4. 80 Powell Street (COMPLETE APPLICATION) DP-2025-00672 – HA-2

Applicant: Rositch Hemphill Architects

Request: To develop a 13-storey mixed-use commercial building consisting of Hotel use on the ground to 12th floor, and retail use at grade and Restaurant use on the 13th floor, over one level of underground parking and having vehicular access from the lane.

Planner's Comments

David Cha, Development Planner, presented the proposal and summarized the recommendations contained in the Staff Committee Report.

1.0 Prior to the issuance of the development permit, revised drawings and information shall be submitted to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning, clearly indicating:

1.1 Design development to enhance the overall public realm, further strengthen the pedestrian activity and reinforce legibility of the former CPR right-of-way by the following:

i. at the proposed Privately Owned Public Space (POPS):

a. improve the expression of the prominent column and the soffit;

Note to Applicant: Given the high visibility from the public realm, the expression and the treatment of the round column and the soffit should be high-quality and contribute to a cohesive and legible pedestrian realm as a significant former CPR right-of-way. Refer also to Recommended condition 1.1 i.d. for visually appealing architecturally integral light fixtures at the covered plaza.

b. relocate the main entrance of the retail/service from the east toward the north with exploration of high-quality operable glazing system that allow for improved direct visual and physical connection between the retail uses and the adjacent covered plaza fronting on Powell Street;

c. improve design for human scale that contributes to the historic streetscape; and

Note to Applicant: Suggested strategies include introducing fine-grained architectural detailing, high-quality material treatment, textured finishes and articulation. Large blank wall conditions should be avoided as much as possible, particularly at the exit stairs and elevator cores that interfaces with the public realm along north, south and west.

- d. provision of comprehensive wayfinding strategies with legible building entrances and enhanced lighting strategies to provide for visually-appealing and active illumination of the public realm to ensure high level of perceived safety and pedestrian comfort at all hours;

Note the Applicant: An architectural, landscape lighting and wayfinding strategies should demonstrate the design approach and distinguishing the commercial and hotel entries. Consideration should be given to adding a visually appealing architecturally integral light fixtures at the covered plaza. Proposed light fixtures should be provided on the architectural and landscape drawings, and may require supplemental reflected ceiling plans, perspective images, or other architectural drawings. Refer also to Urban Design Panel #2 consensus recommendations, dated April 22, 2026.

Note to Applicant: Refer also Standard Urban Design conditions A.1.1, A.1.2, A.1.5, A.1.16 and Standard Landscape condition A.1.17.

- ii. at the rear lane:

- a. delete Class A Loading, and replace with 1.5 m (5 ft.) pullout space to accommodate goods loading and passenger loading vehicles; and

Note to Applicant: Paving treatments at the pullout space, including materiality, patterning, and colour, should be contrasting to clearly delineate between POPS and loading pullout area with architecturally integral bollards to address pedestrian safety concerns while strengthening the pedestrian connection through the site. Refer also to Standard Engineering Services condition A.2.10;

- b. demonstrate design strategies with exploration of improved landscape and surface treatments particularly at the hotel entrance to soften this interface and create a more welcoming experience for the hotel guests and pedestrians;

1.2 Design development to improve the building expression by the following:

- i. refine the varied fenestration and provide a more legible and consistent pattern around the building elevations with high-quality detailing;

Note to Applicant: As shown, the fenestration patterns do not appear fully compatible with the heritage context. Refer also to Standard Urban Design condition A.1.3 and Urban Design Panel #2 consensus recommendations, dated April 22, 2026.

- ii. simplify the building massing, particularly along elevations that are highly visible from the public realm;

Note to Applicant: This can be achieved by extending the floor plate without a setback along west and east elevations at the north and south corners and mitigating blank wall conditions by providing window openings with consistent fenestration patterns and façade treatments.

Note to Applicant: The intent is to strengthen the unique geometry of the diagonal cut shaped site on this important former CPR railway while ensuring compatibility with the heritage context.

2.0 That the conditions set out in Appendix A be met prior to the issuance of the Development Permit.

3.0 That the Notes to Applicant and Conditions of the Development Permit set out in Appendix B be approved by the Board.

Applicants' Comments

The applicant has requested that the Development Permit Board consider revising Up-front Condition 1.2 from a "design development" to a "consideration." Detailed discussion is captured within the Board Discussion section below.

The applicant will work with staff to meet the conditions for approval.

The applicant and staff took questions from the Board and Panel members.

Speakers' Comments

No Speakers.

Panel Comments

Tony Osborn, representing the advisory panel and as Chair of the Urban Design Panel when this application was considered, provided the following comments:

The nature of this historic district deserves a more site-specific architectural response. The current staccato, seemingly random façade composition feels generic and could be applied to many contexts rather than being uniquely rooted in Gastown.

Further work is needed to meaningfully integrate the site's heritage elements and history into the design, strengthening the building's role in telling the story of the place, including its historical connection to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR)

The parkade level P1 service areas remain largely unresolved, appearing only as rooms labeled "service rm." Additional design development is needed to ensure servicing requirements do not negatively impact the quality of the public realm and open spaces.

The Urban Design Panel emphasized that this is an exceptionally important site in Gastown. While the proposal has reached an acceptable standard, further refinement is encouraged to achieve a design that fully reflects the site's unique heritage and civic significance.

Arno Matis echoed previous comments that this is an important site and recognizing the ongoing collaboration between the applicant and staff. While the design has not yet fully realized its intent and requires further refinement in response to Urban Design Panel and staff recommendations, there is confidence that it can reach that standard through continued design development. He expressed support for the proposed additional building height subject to those conditions being achieved.

Alex Putrenko supported the height relaxation, noting that it is appropriate given the public realm benefits being provided. The podium and ground-floor design, including the retail unit, were viewed positively as strong contribution to the public realm. However, Alex felt that further refinement of the overall architectural expression would strengthen the proposal.

Sam Ibrahim supported the proposed height relaxation, noting that it is justified within the HA-2 zoning framework, which does not prescribe a maximum FSR, and by the provision of public open space at grade. The public realm response was considered appropriate and adequately addressed through staff conditions. He felt the proposal is moving in the right direction and shows promise with continued refinement to strengthen the project's contextual fit.

Hitesh Neb supported the proposed height, noting that it is contextually appropriate given similar building heights in the area. While generally supportive of the public realm strategy, Hitesh felt further consideration is needed regarding the programming and operation of the pedestrian connection, including the management of the water feature, CPTED measures, and the timing and operation of gates during nighttime hours. Regarding contextual fit, Hitesh commented that this project is being introduced into a heritage district rather than attached to a heritage building. As such, the proposal's contemporary and highly distinguishable architectural expression was viewed as appropriate and generally compatible with the character of Gastown.

Winki Tam expressed excitement to see the transformation of the site from a surface parking lot to a hotel and viewed the proposal as ambitious and creative. She agreed that the architectural expression could benefit from further refinement. The proposed height is fully justified given the project's anticipated benefits to Gastown and Chinatown, including support for local businesses and nearby cultural institutions. The public realm concept was also supported, with appreciation for comments regarding CPTED and the commitment required to operate the POPs.

Board Discussion

Matt Shillito thanked staff, the applicant team, and the Advisory Panel, noting that the proposal represents a thoughtful response to a highly challenging and unique site. The delivery of a hotel was strongly supported as it addresses one of Council's priorities under the Hotel Development Policy and would make a positive contribution to Gastown.

Matt considered the contemporary architectural approach appropriate for the HA-2 context, finding it both distinguishable from and compatible with the surrounding heritage character. He also commended the project's response to the site's constraints, adjacent properties, and historic CPR corridor context.

While supportive of the project overall, Matt agreed with staff, the Urban Design Panel, and the Advisory Panel that further design development of the façade and architectural expression under Condition 1.2 is

warranted given the building's prominence and visibility from all sides. Support was expressed to retain Condition 1.2 without revising the condition to a "consideration" to further refine the design without compromising its creative intent.

The proposed height relaxation was supported, noting that it facilitates a viable hotel use while delivering significant public benefits, including the publicly accessible open space and pedestrian connection along the CPR corridor. Support was also expressed for further refinement of the public realm and access arrangements under Condition 1.1 to maximize the potential of these public amenities.

Overall, Matt supported the staff recommendations and the motion of approval, describing the project as an interesting and valuable addition to Gastown.

Lon LaClaire was pleased to second the motion with the proposed conditions. He expressed appreciation for the amount that had been achieved on such a constrained and challenging site.

Corrie Okell thanked staff, the applicant team, and the Advisory Panel for their work and feedback. She noted that this is a unique site and that the proposed hotel use would be a welcome addition to the city. Corrie expressed support for all the proposed conditions and had no further comments to add.

Motion

The decision of the Board: THAT the Board APPROVE Complete Development Application DP-2025-00672 subject to the conditions in accordance with the Staff Committee Report dated May 27 & June 10, 2026

Meeting adjourned at: 4:23 pm