

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: November 12, 2025

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Cascadia Room, 3rd floor, City Hall, 453 W 12 Ave

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Aik Ablimit (Chair)
Michele Cloghesy
Helen Besharat
Scott Mitchell
Tony Osborn
Allyse Li
Parisa Seyed-Hoseini

RECORDING SECRETARY: K. Cermeno

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 375 E 1 st Ave 2. 80 Powell St

1.Address: 375 E 1st Ave
Permit No.: RZ-2024-00102
Description: To rezone the subject site from CD-1 (402) (Comprehensive Development) District to a new CD-1 (Comprehensive Development) District to allow for the development of three 35-storey mixed-use buildings and a 40-storey mixed-use building with a six-storey podium, and includes: 639 strata and 485 rental units; commercial and office space; 225 hotel rooms; 32 social housing units; a cultural amenity space; a floor space ratio of 10.73; and building heights up to 140 m (458 ft.). This rezoning application is being considered under the Broadway Plan.
Application Status: Rezoning Application
Architect: Boniface Oleksiuk Politano Architects
Delegation: Adrian Politano, Architect, BOP
David Stoyko, Landscape Architect
Staff: Chee Chan & Hamid Shayan

EVALUATION: Support with the following recommendations (7/0)

Planner's Introduction:

Chee Chan, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project with a brief description of the existing site context, followed by an overview of the anticipated context as per the Broadway Plan. Chee concluded the presentation with a description of the site and a summary of the rezoning proposal.

Hamid Shayan, Development Planner gave an overview of the neighborhood context in relation to the proposal, followed by the expectations of the built-form guidelines for this project. Hamid then gave a brief description of the proposed project before concluding with Staff questions for the Panel.

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

1. With due consideration given to the key principles of Broadway Plan, advice from the Panel is sought on the proposed Height, Density, Overall Massing with particular attention to:
 - Podium massing and its contribution to the surrounding context
 - Relationship between tower massing and openness to the sky
2. Please provide commentary on the quality of public realm, open spaces, and the landscape design with particular attention to the following:
 - Pedestrian interest, activity and flow around and through the buildings (along Cultural Ribbon from adjacent station plaza Brewery Creek Greenway)
 - Central atrium and its contribution to the Cultural Ribbon
 - Outdoor amenity spaces on the podium level and their access to the daylight
 - The buildings interface to the public realm along all sides
3. Please Provide any comments on preliminary material palette, architectural expression, and details to assist staff review of the future DP application.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Ian Campell, a hereditary chief of Squamish Nation and project consultant, gave an introduction to the project and its expression of the Cultural Ribbon. Applicant Adrian Politano, Architect for BOP gave a general overview of the project followed by David Styoko, Landscape Architect presenting on the landscape design and sustainability strategies.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **TONY OSBORN** and seconded by **HELEN BESHARAT** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel Recommend **Support with recommendations** to the project with the following recommendations to be reviewed by City Staff:

1. Maintain a strong alignment with Broadway Plan Principles and Cultural Ribbon concept while refining the relationship between the towers' massing and openness to the sky;
2. Explore strategies to reduce perceived bulk of the four towers, and enhance skyline variation including articulation and demodulation and interface;
3. Ensure podium massing contributes positively to the throne, the context as well as reinforcing the human scale experience at the street level;
4. Strengthen the pedestrian flow and activity along the Cultural Ribbon, ensuring clear connection from station plaza to the site, as well as the proposed Greenway, improve the pocket or ground level park for openness usability and making sure it its universally accessible across grade transitions;
5. Enhance the central atrium's role as a year round public space and ensure introduction of natural daylight that receives adequate light for the intended purposes;
6. Refine building interfaces on all sides to activate the public realm and support inclusive animated spaces beyond the peak hours;
7. Maintain the simplified purposeful façade expression, while refining some of the detailing in this respect that the cultural ribbon and also the industry history of the site as well as reinforce the human scale through materiality;
8. At the ground level strengthen the retail frontage for improved street activation;
9. Regarding the material palette and execution of detail, ensure the cultural narrative is incorporated as part of the design resolution moving forward.

Summary of Panel Commentary:

Panel noted the Cultural Ribbon is the biggest accomplishment.

Consider how the corners meet the ground plane.

The rental buildings facing the railway are bulky.

The tower base could use more refinement to bring human scale to the street.
Further articulation is encouraged.

Explore strategies to reduce perceived bulkiness of the 4 towers.

Make sure the podium receives adequate lighting.

Consider sun and shading from buildings to each other and future buildings.

Presenting the lobby as private space, misses the opportunity of the public plaza as a public entry into the special Cultural Ribbon.

There is opportunity to improve the public realm interface at all 4 corners (i.e. setbacks or lifting the height).

Public realm in middle of 4 towers are cramped.

A panelist noted the hotel lobby and the corner entrance are not successful.

Encourage retail at the lower level having access to transit.

Consider retail and urban amenities on the ground floor.

The transit station connection to the site is not inviting, consider more glass.

Concern with the control of the public atrium, how successful will it be from an urban perspective, consider more outdoor plaza space that is not so controlled.

Hard to call atrium public when its controlled 9-5.

Consider the role of lighting and shadowing with the interior of the atrium.

A panelist noted to consider changing height of podium on the south side to allow more sunlight in the glazed atrium area.

Missed opportunity to represent the project attached to an artist precinct such as Emily Carr, only way to access artist lobby is through the parkade. Panelists encouraged more presence of the artist space.

Not convinced with the setbacks of all the 4 towers as they only achieve the minimum.

The greenway does not really have a direction or purpose going up to the loading bay. It is not successful.

A panelist noted the loading and unloading is well done.

A panelist noted that the commercial part of the podium should not only be reserved for large corporations and consider designing for small scale artists or businesses that can afford smaller spaces.

Consider celebrating the bike journey. The entries/exiting should not be hidden.

Mixed use hub concept is compelling.

Applicant's Response: The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments

2.Address: 80 Powell St.
Permit No.: DP-2025-00672
Description: To develop a 13-storey, mixed-use commercial building on this site, consisting of: Hotel use from ground to 12th floor; restaurant use on the 13th floor; former railway ROW preserved and enhanced as public open space; a proposed Floor Space Ratio of 8.0 for the site; a proposed floor area of approximately 63,921.81 sq. ft./ 5,938.53 m²; a proposed height of 137.5 ft./ 41.91 m; all over one level of underground parking, with vehicular access from the lane.
Application Status: Complete Development Application
Architect: RH Architects
Delegation: James Wu, Architect, RH Architects
Joseph Fry, Landscape Architect, Hapa Collective
Staff: David Cha

EVALUATION: Recommend Resubmission (6/1)

Planner's Introduction:

David Cha, Development Planner gave an overview of the neighborhood context in relation to the proposal, followed by the expectations of the built-form guidelines for this project. David then gave a brief description of the proposed project before concluding with Staff questions for the Panel.

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

1. Please comment on the quality of the pedestrian access connection, walkability and legibility of the former Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) right-of-way, particularly at the publicly accessible covered plaza fronting on Powell Street;
2. Please comment on the proposed density, height and massing considering the unique site condition of the diagonal cut orientation on the following:
 - a) Contribution and continuity of the former CPR corridor as a gateway site, and;
 - b) Contextual fit with the neighbouring properties along Powell Street including considerations of building setbacks;
3. Please comment on the architectural expression, façade articulation, fenestration, colour and material treatment of the proposed building in relationship to the surrounding context;

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Applicant James Wu, Architect for RH Architects, noted the objectives and gave a general overview of the project followed by Joseph Fry, Landscape Architect presenting on the landscape design strategies.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **Tony Osborn** and seconded by **Helen Besharat** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel Recommend **RESUBMISSION** to the project with the following recommendations to be reviewed by City Staff:

1. Reconsider design of the covered plaza to ensure its function as an active, safe, and inviting public space rather than a narrow pedestrian corridor / thoroughfare;
2. Consider further treatment and activation of the blank façade at the lane and sidewall;
3. Revisit elevator access, gateway control, structure at ground level to open up more for public access;
4. Explore opportunities to give ground floor back to the public with further improvements and further activate the public realm;
5. Support for the proposed height and massing if the ground level is further opened up for the public as a series of open spaces;
6. Further design development of contextual fit as it relates to the architectural expression and materiality;
7. Revisit the façade articulation and material palette to ensure compatibility with the heritage context and avoid overly generic or utilitarian expression;
8. Consider material durability that weathers well overtime;
9. Further design development at rooftop crown and soffit treatments at the covered plaza;

Summary of Panel Commentary:

- The panel noted this is a unique site and the building will serve as a focal point in the Gastown historic area. Respecting the historic context is important.
- Panel in general noted support for the density and height, however, have following concerns and comments:
 - Pedestrian access and covered plaza:
 - Current pedestrian connection feels uninviting and potentially unsafe, especially through the narrow 8 ft corridor and when gated.
 - Consider an inviting public space that pedestrians will want to walk through including kids, adults with limited mobility and wheelchairs etc. with improved permeability and pedestrian flow.
 - Pedestrian access connection appear weak as packing all the spaces on the ground level with exit stairs, vertical circulation and underground parkade ramp while providing pedestrian access is challenging on a tight site.
 - Reconsider elevator core location for convenient hotel access from Powell Street.
 - Concerns with pedestrian access condition adjacent to the underground parade

- ramp.
 - Concerns with dominant exit stair wall structures for both from Powell Street and the lane, especially the stair wall facing the lane with blank wall condition.
 - Lane access should not appear as secondary and further development of the lane interface is needed with consideration of the garbage collection strategy.
 - Incorporate storytelling elements/artifacts, textured paving, and improved ground-plane treatment.
 - Concerns with CPTED particularly behind the green wall.
 - Consider increasing ground-level height for daylight access and further improve the soffit treatment.
- Architectural expression and materials:
 - Concerns with contextual fit, particularly the façade fenestration, materiality, color and lack of detailing within the historic Gastown context.
 - Contemporary design is supportable, but it should reference successful Gastown examples (e.g., Woodward's) to understand how façade composition, fenestration, materiality, color, and detailing can create a purposeful contrast while blending within a historic context.
 - Use contemporary materials that weather well over time, similar to how historic materials age within the historic neighborhood context.
 - Consider design refinement of the rooftop crown.
 - General:
 - Ensure more detailed coordination with consultants (mechanical, electrical etc.) Appropriate to overall design development at DP stage.

Applicant's Response: The applicant team thanked the panel for their comments.