

Date: NOV 17, 2025
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Place: City Hall Joe Wai Room/ Council Chambers

PRESENT:

Board:

Tim Potter, Assistant Director, Special Projects (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:

Joe Carreira, Representative of the Development Industry
Hitesh Neb, Representative General Public
Michael Gordon, Representative of the Development Industry
Sam Ibrahim, Representative of the General Public
Lily Chan, Representative of the General Public

570 Columbia Street (Keefer) (COMPLETE APPLICATION) DP-2017-00681

Delegation:

James KM Cheng Architecture

City Staff:

M. So (Chair), Development Services
D. Robinson, Development Planning
P. Cheng, Urban Design & Development Planning
D. Lee, Engineering Services
P. Sheikhabari, Development Services
JL. Borsa, Development Services

Recording Secretary: K.Cermeno

1. MINUTES APPROVED

No minutes for approval.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

3. 570 Columbia Street (Keefer) (COMPLETE APPLICATION) DP-2017-00681

Applicant: James KM Cheng Architecture

Request: Seeking minor relaxations to support new design, to support a sensitive architectural response to the established cultural and historic identity of the area, as outlined in the applicable guidelines.

Speakers Comments (cont'd from Oct 20, 2025, meeting)

Leyla Brino Sara noted strong opposition for the project. Leyla urges the board to reject the project as it does not respect the history and will displace the Chinatown residents. The community has spoken numerous times against this project. This project is now bigger and denser and does not reflect the original proposal. The project represents many violations, and they are not minor technicalities such as the increase in height. Leyal noted we are amid a severe affordability housing crisis. Research shows building with market rate condos only displace and encourages gentrification. Chinatown has spoken they need affordable housing not luxury condos.

Asura Enkhbayar noted this is the second date and there is already a detailed account as to why the project should be rejected. The project violates the technical limits that the city requires along with the erosion of cultures and community of the Chinatown area. There are elements that are distasteful to the Chinese culture. Gentrification is not abstract and not something that just happens it is a direct result from the decisions from people on this board. As board members you have a responsibility to the community and recognize the power you hold and hear the voices from the seniors of this community. Reject the proposal so that gentrification is not further sanctioned. Asura noted his strong opposition for the project.

Dan Seto noted he has witnessed the changes of Chinatown over the years and now it has come down to survival. The building being proposed approved 111 suites two years ago and now they want 133. The changes should require a new application as it does not affect the old application. The new proposed atrium does not serve the community. The new proposal will block the views on a symbolic footprint which is the monument. With gentrification and the new developments this has caused for an increase in the cost of living which only displaces people.

Terry Hunter noted he is deeply concerned with the future of Chinatown and the gentrification driven by projects such as this one. There continues to be developers to erode the history of Chinatown for their profits. Terry noted his strong opposition to the project.

Melody Ma noted this is her fourth time strongly opposing the project. In 2017 room was filled of individuals from all walks of life and Chinese veterans who opposed this project. Since then, some of the elders have passed away where they were honored at the monument which is being obstructed by the proposed project. Melody continued to acknowledge these elders by name and their opposition for the project. Melody noted Architect James Cheng who opposed is now a part of the applicant team.

Sanjeet Dhillon speaking on behalf of Chris Gardner noted support for the project.

Tony Letvinchuk noted support for the project and its latest and fully articulated design of the project.

Max Lepur noted support for the project. Max noted throughout the projects public consultation process there was strong support from local groups including the Vancouver Chinatown Foundation and the Chinatown Merchants Association. The open houses and consultations were well done and informative. Max noted this project is needed in the area.

Yi Chien Jade Ho noted strong opposition for the project. Yi Chen works closely with low-income Chinese and members from the downtown Eastside. Healthy cities are not made by luxury condos its through accessible communities and embracing culture. The approval of this project will cause elder isolation. The number of homelessness continues to rise. The project overcasts the monument. Urge the board to reject. Your decision will reflect if the board stands by a developer driven for profit or the members of this city.

James Lloyd noted opposition for the project. There is no Vancouver without the labor and imprint of Chinese workers. This development is a disgrace to the monument. The previous project did not reflect Chinatown or provide social housing. The proposal presented today is throwing shade on key historical sites. Note this project is bigger and yet still no social housing available. Urge the board to reject the proposal and preserve the heart of Chinatown.

Megan Naito (via translator) a senior in Chinatown noted strong opposition for the project. This project does not protect the youth and low-income residents, it does not protect the homes of the people. When the proposal was first presented, we ask the board to request it include social housing as part of the proposal. Chinatown does not need luxury condo; it needs low-income housing. If we are forced to move away from here a lot of us would lose the support from our daily life, adapting would be hard. Working with indigenous elders they have been doing their best to improve their life and culture on their own lands. I deeply felt Chinatown and downtown east side residents are on the same boat. Gentrification and development of housing is pushing out seniors, indigenous and low-income neighbors. 105 Keefer is across the monument site a historic region. Megan urge the board to reject the proposal.

Flo Lai noted strong opposition for the project. The site carries a profound intangible heritage and significance. Segregation in employment, housing and municipal practices confined Chinese residents to Chinatown. Within that landscape, the site became the first children's playground in North America. Flo continued to note Chinatown historical contribution to the community and recent policies that have negatively impacted the Chinatown community including residents and local businesses. The proposed development continues to threaten and overshadow the Memorial square, diminish the community space built for and by the Chinese. This proposal will further erase tangible and intangible heritage and significance of Chinatown and shift the balance from people to profit.

Mike Drummond noted on behalf of the members of the Urban Development Institute their support for the project and ask the Board to approve the project. Mike noted they have been involved in the process and supportive of the development for years now. While the city remains in an unprecedented housing crisis, we cannot further delay more housing. This project is a high-quality building that suits the neighborhood and functions better overall, there is no reason to delay the approval.

Jayin Wo noted strong opposition for the project. Jayin noted lack of affordable housing. We are not short of luxury housing. Jayin noted in 2025 there are 5235 unhoused individuals and 22 % of them are seniors, we don't need more luxury housing. Why are we bending the city rules and laws and going to court to get this approved. This project is a testament that this city is a space for profit not for the people. People have opposed this project for ten years and still fighting, this is a punch in the gut to the people from the city. The lantern on top of the building reflects the people being killed in the city by such developers. It feels that the City of Vancouver and these developments discriminate against poor people.

Harrison Pratt called on the Board to reject the proposal under the current permit and conditions allowed and comply with the Supreme courts order as written but confining its deliberations. The applicant should be required to submit a new application for its current changed proposal. Harrison noted strong opposition because there is higher density but no social housing, these are empty commodity boxes. The proposal overshadows and encroaches the memorial square. The setbacks and height limits have been ignored and the so-called community space hidden in the back alley is cramped and inaccessible. The architecture does not hold up the Chinatown legacy. This is a for-profit project and nothing else.

Angela Mei noted strong opposition to the project. Angela noted her own community was forcibly and unjustly displaced. Angela fights with Chinatown to protect this area from gentrification and displacement because the anti-Asian racism that was and is directed at Chinese and Japanese Canadians is intertwined. There is a constant disregard for the Chinese and Japanese communities and its all rooted in the same internalized discrimination, it all comes from the same taste for liberal, supposedly democratic, multicultural money-making. The community has been fighting since 2017 and yet the City does not listen and is blind to Beedies problematic past. It is not enough to claim expertise but to listen to the residents, organizers, and the most vulnerable. More shelter and social housing are desperately needed. Angela urged the board to exercise power to reject the proposal and protect Chinatown and its most vulnerable residents.

Cecilia Wang noted strong opposition for the project. Cecilia noted she spoke at the previous meetings in 2023 and nothing has changed. Cost of living is driving people out of the city, but jobs are still concentrated within the city causing for longer commutes. Comparing areas such as Chinatown and First Shaughnessy. Chinatown's cultural significance is dismissed yet Shaughnessy is very much protected. If you are going to displace a community the developer should pay for the people to be relocated and not leave it to the non-profits to pick up the pieces.

Calum Tam noted strong opposition for the project. Calum noted the condos overshadow memorial square and this development continues to discriminate against our history. For decades the Chinese were denied jobs due to our history, so we made a home in Chinatown. The City of Vancouver delivered a formal apology to Chinese community in 2018, yet our voices remained ignored, and the apology was an empty promise to rebuilding a relationship with the Chinese community.

Lindsey Brown noted opposition for the project. Lindsey noted she has been involved in the fight against 105 Keefer since the very beginning. The 105 Keefer proposal violates all the principles for cities and urban design under the Vancouver declaration. To build a good city you need meaningful participatory collaboration with communities and the project should promote culturally appropriate design and a beautiful human scale. Lindsay noted it is enraging to come back again and again to fight against 105 Keefer. It is insulting when the applicant comes back with a proposal that does not reflect any feedback, no social housing, puts senior spaces in the alley, disregards the community and the memorial square.

Jin Li noted strong opposition to the proposal and its changes. In a historically working-class area like Chinatown neighboring Downtown Eastside a development that does not include social housing should not be considered. A recent CMHC report states that there are 2500 new condos sitting empty in Metro Vancouver. Jin noted with such many newly built condos sitting unsold a number which doubled in the last year how can new developments proceed with no social housing. The board is allowing developments that Vancouverites cannot afford. The developer continuously ignores community pushback, the courtyard its not beneficial to the community as its only accessible during certain times of the day. Jin noted there was no significant architectural changes, this proposal violated the guidelines that require a new application considering this is a new concept in 2025. The changes do not comply with the current 2025 zoning and bylaws.

Pearl Wong noted opposition for the proposal. The community has repeatedly opposed and refused this building. Its impact on Chinatown's present and future are negative. From a technical perspective the building is too tall and an eye sore, the permit expired when the developer did not meet the city's priors' conditions by a specified deadline. The developer should have to restart the application. The developer's application is not clear or transparent and did not involve the Chinatown community. Pearl noted the CMHC stated there are over 2500 unsold empty condo units in Vancouver. The reason being the condos cost more to build than local residents can afford. If this proposal is approved another tower of empty condos is being built.

This proposal is simply to maximize profit and not to maximize livability. Similar market rate condos that have already been built and promised an economic boost has yet to materialize, everyone is hurting. Social and cooperative housing is needed the City needs to face its current realities that market rate and luxury condos do not revive neighborhood and local communities. This proposal did not make sense in 2017 and does not make sense now.

Rita Wong noted her opposition for the project. Rita noted what is needed is a society where everyone, including the elderly, the poor, and those who call Chinatown home can live with dignity. This design is not the right fit for this site. The memorial square for many is the heart of Chinatown, therefore should be given proper respect. This building is an insult to how this space functions for the community, instead of bringing people together through care and accessibility it pits high income residents against low income. There is not record the prior conditions were met and this permit should have expired. The building violates height limits. There should be one set of rules for everybody not one set for the rich and another for the poor. Chinatown needs a culturally respectful community-oriented site with affordable housing. Back in 2017 a land swap was discussed urge the city to find a way to make this happen.

Stephanie Ling noted this is her third time speaking against this proposal and noted opposition for the proposal today. Stephanie noted it is unclear why the proposal is being considered under the 2017 HA1A zoning when it is 2025/2026. This should be a different proposal having to go through a new application process. Stephanie noted design aspects of the project that are unsuccessful and violate the conditions. It is an insult to have the senior space within a service alley. There is no meaningful access or physical invitation to the space. The project did not address any of the concerns from the community who spoke in 2017 and in 2023. The City and developer ignore the repeated concerns of over hundreds of speakers calling for the developer to demonstrate real social benefit. This project is being approached undemocratically.

Michael Tan noted strong opposition for the project as it fails to meet the necessary design guideline and ask the board to reject the proposal. It is crucial to safeguard the integrity of the Chinatown community, and any proposed development should align with the best interest of the community. The development disregards the established design guidelines posing a threat to the cohesive visual appeal of the neighborhood additionally the scale and density are out of proportion with the surrounding neighborhoods. This development diminishes they quality of life for the residents. Michael noted the design and architectural elements that are unsuccessful and do not meet the requirements.

Avril Hwang noted strong opposition to the project as it displaces people and culture. This neighborhood has undergone rapid and destructive gentrification. Time and time again elders and low-income residents are displaced by luxury condo developments.

This development does nothing to address the housing crises rather will deepen homelessness. Avril noted the proposal has major architectural changes and a fundamentally different design which should warrant for a new application. Avril urged the board to reject the proposal.

Remi Landry Yuen noted strong opposition for the project on the grounds the prior to condition was not met by the date specified in the prior to letter. This should require a new application with the new design complying to the revised zoning and development bylaws. Remi noted the design and architectural elements that are unsuccessful and violate the conditions. The current proposal's intention is to displace neighborhoods like Chinatown and push out low-income residents. The integration of privately owned public space does not look to support the current community. The proposal does not respect significant spaces such as the memorial square. Real design elements that are for the culture is housing for the community and fostering non hostile public spaces for the residents who are here currently.

Sydney Ball noted strong opposition for the project. BD and other developers in Chinatown are profiting off the culture and community that was created by the very people they are displacing. Luxury condos lead to destruction of the services that low-income residents rely on. The small business in BDs allocation will be nothing but homogenized white walls serving affluent customers who do not reflect the heart of Chinatown. The removal of all social housing by BD is a testament of their intention. This development ignores this is a welcoming space in Chinatown for seniors and intergenerational residents. This development is destructive and banishes the community.

The staff and applicant team took questions from the board and advisory members.

Panel Comments

Hitesh Neb noted no objections with the height or any elements encroaching in the height envelope as it will not impact shadowing.

Hitesh noted the encroachment is unfortunate but minor. Encroachment is for elements that are decorative so not to concern about it.

Hitesh noted concern some of the windows will not receive daylight.

Hitesh noted hope the due diligence has been done with the FSR that is being proposed today.

Hitesh recommended to consider the 4 things that are in the purview of this board and contemplate those.

Lilly Chan noted based on the purview of what they have been asked to weigh on, there is no major concern on height restrictions or FSR. The applicant team has satisfied concerns of site line and shadowing.

Lilly noted concern lies regarding the opposition by the local community with how this project has presented itself.

Understanding the marginalization of the Chinese community consider what more can be done at the ground level to not further marginalize the community with this luxury building. Consider how to engage the community more with this building.

Lilly noted more can be done at the street level to acknowledge the Keefer triangle. Generally, recommend to look further how this building engages the street, the square and offer more in terms of entrance to the community and the site in general.

Michael Gordon thanked the board, staff and speakers for their time and comments.

Michael noted there are three fundamentals' areas, Sun Yat Sen Park and Gardens, Memorial square and the Chinese Cultural Center.

Michael noted three heritage criteria that is looked for is the building distinguishable, complimentary and compatible.

Michael noted the building is distinguishable. It is generally complimentary the façade does pick up the Chinese heritage in a thoughtful way. Compatible, appreciate the site lines from the Sun Yat Sen gardens to the east.

Michael noted concerns that the development is not in harmony and balance with this precinct. Do not support the development as proposed, i.e. height and floor space.

Michael noted there was recommendations from the community to consider adding more trees along Columbia St. Michael suggest to staff to consider adding more trees in the conditions and placing the trees in trenches.

Joe Carreira noted his presence in 2023, and the applicant was sent away to redesign and address some issues raised today.

Joe noted the relaxations requests are minor.

Joe noted an exchange of an increased atrium in exchange for more public space.

Joe noted the applicants responded to the 2023 recommendations while keeping with the conditions proposed.

Sam Ibrahim acknowledged this a politically charged project and a lot of sentiments going around.

Sam noted the applicant has successfully shown its not overshadowing the public space and the site lines have been considered as well. Privacy has been considered.

Sam noted the courtyard form provides a lot of livability and community within the building.

Sam noted some concern with livability of the secondary bedrooms in the units.

Regarding the encroachment to public realm do think it's a minor request of relaxation no concern

Sam noted there is no concern with the FSR, this is to provide courtyard an all-weather public space.

Board Discussion

Corrie Okell acknowledged all the speakers.

Corrie noted they have heard most of the community in opposition and those in support. Have heard concern the application should not proceed as they did not meet all the conditions.

Corrie noted the applicant can ask for an extension which they did and there is no requirement they must have a new application.

Corrie acknowledged the conditions from the 2023 board and believe the concerns and conditions have been addressed with the minor relaxation which Corrie noted her support.

Matt Shillito acknowledged the speakers for their input and passion for this project.

Matt noted the scope of their decision is limited to the relaxations rather the overall principle of the development.

Matt noted the proposal does meet conditions presented in the 2023 meeting and does a successful job to integrate and modern building in a such a historical site.

Matt encourages the staff and applicant team to continue working with the CHPAC advisory body.

Lon LaClaire thanked all the speakers for their time.

Lon noted engineering is involved with the minor encroachments and noted his support for these encroachments.

Lon noted his support for the relaxations and minor requests.

All board members voted in favor of the application to move forward subject to the conditions noted in the Staff Committee Report.

Motion

The decision of the Board: THAT the Board APPROVE Development Application **DP-2017-00681** subject to the conditions in accordance with the Staff Committee Report dated October 8, 2025.

Meeting adjourned at 6:03pm