

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: Dec 6, 2023

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: WEBEX

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Craig Taylor
Jane Vorbrodt
Stefan Aepli
Bob Lilly
Margot Long
Meeta Lele
Heidi Nesbitt
Peeraj Thakre
Scott Romses

Excused item 3
Excused item 1 & 2
Excused item 1

REGRETS: Amina Yasin
Reza Mousakhani

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. OTC – Parcel C (Phase 1) – 989 W 41st Ave
2. 8-36 W Cordova St & 15-27 W Hastings St
3. 3398 North Arm Ave

1. Address: OTC - Parcel C (Phase 1) - 989 W 41st Ave
Permit No.: DP-2023-00755
Description: OTC-Parcel C (Phase 1) - Located on southwest corner of the OTC masterplan with frontage on 41st Avenue to the south and the future Central Road to the east. It comprises three towers with approximately 446,000 sf of market condo, 126,000 sf of secured rental housing (including 25% for moderate income rental housing units) and 24,000 sf of retail focused around a landscaped pedestrian mews.

Application Status: Complete Development Application
Architect: Hariri Pontarini Arch. + Arcadis
Delegation: Michael Attard, Architect, HPA
M. Bruckner, Architect, Arcadis Architect
Chris Phillips, Landscape Architect, PFS
Kevin Welsh, Sustainability Consultant

Staff: Karen Kallweit-Graham & Omar Aljebouri

EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (7/0)

Planner's Introduction:

Karen Kallweit, Development Planner, introduced the project with a brief description of the existing site context, followed by an overview of the anticipated context as per the OTC masterplan. Ms. Kallweit concluded the presentation with a description of the site and a summary of the rezoning proposal.

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

1. The increase in the height of C3 tower and the 1-storey podium of C2.
2. The response to the rezoning condition for towers C1 and C2 as focal points of the OTC.
3. The development of the public realm and landscape design (e.g. the mews, the corner plaza, commercial interface)
4. Any additional advice.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Applicant Michael Attard, Architect for HPA, and Mark Bruckner, Architect for Arcadis, noted the objectives and gave a general overview of the project followed by Chris Phillips, Landscape Architect presenting on the landscape design.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **MS. THAKRE** and seconded by **MR. LILY** 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:

Consensus Items:

The proposal could benefit from a more integrated and legible accessibility strategy.
The proposal could benefit from including more resiliency strategy into its sustainability approach.
Providing more visible amenities at grade will further help in activating the public realm.
Develop the connection to the mews to that on Parcel D.

Summary of Panel Commentary:

There was general support from the panel for the increase in height of the C-3 building.
Panel suggested exploring height increase of C2 to create a focal point tower. We were not seeking support for increasing this height.

There was general support of the podium of the C-2 tower. The panel noted the rezoning conditions have been generally met.

A panelist noted to consider the soffits of the C-2 tower.
Some panelists noted the C-1 & C-2 towers do not have to be focal points.
A panelist noted to consider the refined pallet of the C-1 and C-2 towers throughout the site.
Some panelists noted the stepping of the podiums is interesting as it allows for more lighting into the mews.
A panelist noted that 6 podium storeys are not successful when up against the pedestrian realms.

There were comments noting further work is needed on the site regarding accessibility.
Consider how you can reduce the efforts of individuals with mobility issues when travelling around.

A panelist noted to consider the landing of the ramp as a place of refuge, presently feels disconnected from the rest of the area.

Generally, the public realm and landscape design are successful.
A panelist noted the public realm is relying too much on the retail to make it successful. There should be reasons to come through and not just pass through.
Consider some public art or some more engaged seating.
A panelist noted that scattered pieces of furniture are a challenge for the visually impaired.

Consider a better amenity space at the ground level. This will help with the social resiliency of the overall project.
Consider more spaces for kids play.

There was a general positive feeling of the mews as a successful part of the public realm.
Some panelist noted it will be dark and could benefit from further development. A panelist noted the mews is hidden consider a way to open up the sides more; the idea of a lighting feature is nice.
Others noted the contained feeling is nice; it is a good buffer from the traffic.

There are some great initiatives of sustainability and climate change. Some panelists noted the energy strategy is not as strong, it appears to be hitting the bare minimum. Sustainable strategy should be more resilient.

The panel noted support for the integration of landscape throughout the project. The amount of planting and pocket spaces that come together is successful.

Applicant’s Response: The applicant team thanked the panel for their comment.

2. Address: 8-36 W Cordova St and 15-27 W Hastings St
Permit No.: RZ-2023-00035
Description: To rezone 8-36 West Cordova Street and 15-27 West Hastings Street from HA-2 (Historic Area) and DD (Downtown) Districts to CD-1 (Comprehensive Development) District under the Downtown Eastside Plan. The proposal is for mixed-use development as follows:

8-36 West Cordova St (“Cohen Block”) 11-storey building with commercial and office uses; Approximately 264,047 sq. ft. of office space; Approximately 18,380 sq. ft. of ground floor commercial space; A building height of 48.7 m (159 ft.); A floor space ratio (FSR) of 8.77; and 211 vehicle parking spaces and 164 bicycle spaces.

15-27 West Hastings St (“Samuel Tower”) 19-storey building with commercial and residential uses; 127 secured market rental units and 62 below market units; Approximately 5,042 sq. ft. of ground floor commercial space; A building height of 54.8 m (179 ft.); A floor space ratio (FSR) of 9.49; and 74 vehicle parking spaces and 419 bicycle spaces. The Cohen Block is located in the Gastown sub area of the Downtown Eastside Plan. The proposal requests rezoning consideration of height in excess of the existing policy. The Gastown sub-area allows a maximum height of 22.9 m (75 ft.).

The Cohen Block includes a number of heritage properties, and as such, the City’s Heritage Program and Heritage Policies apply. The application proposes primarily façade-only retention for the Cohen Block (Vancouver Heritage Register Category ‘A’ and ‘B’). The Samuel Tower is located in the Victory Square sub area of the Downtown East side Plan. The proposal requests consideration of height in excess of the existing policy. The Victory Square sub-area allows a maximum height of 32 m (105 ft.).

Application Status: Rezoning Application
Architect: Michael Green Architecture
Delegation: Chris Knight, Architect, Michael Green Architecture
Joseph Fry Landscape Architect, HAPA Collaborative
Nathaniel Funk, Owner/Developer, Bosa Properties

Staff: Hiroko Kobayashi, Chee Chan, Elijah Sabadlan

EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (5/3)

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 and policies as per the Downtown East Side Plan. Mr. Chan concluded the presentation with a description of the site and a summary of the rezoning proposal.

Hiroko Kobayashi, Development Planner gave an overview of the neighbourhood context in relation to the proposal, followed by the expectations of the built-form guidelines for this project. Ms. Kobayashi 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:

- **The proposed overall form, scale and massing (Tripartite) articulation** with particular consideration given to the overall performance as follows;

On the West Cordova site:

- 1) Compatibility and proportional relationship of the new addition to the heritage buildings.
- 2) Contributions to the historic character and fabric of the federally designated Gastown National Historic site and adjacent urban context.

On the West Hastings site:

- 1) Contribution of the tower development to the heritage sawtooth streetscape.

- **The interface with the public realm** at all building frontages including the laneway.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Applicant Chris Knight, Architect for Michael Green Architecture noted the project objectives and gave a general overview of the project. Joseph Fry., Landscape Architect, presented the landscape design.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **MR. ROMSES** and seconded by **MR. AEPLI** 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. The reveals and recesses on the Cordova building should be greater in depth and contrast in materiality;
2. Consider a greater emphasis on the shoulder of the corner of the Hastings Street building;
3. To enable further sculpting of the building to address the Zero-Lot-Line condition and support a more equitable relationship with the adjacent properties;
4. Reconsider the east and west facing windows on the Hastings Street tower to address overlook and privacy concerns;
5. Provide non-market amenity spaces with more sunlight and views;
6. Provide a more meaningful contribution to reconciliation by providing strategies that respect and understand reconciliation and its history.

Summary of Panel Commentary:

There was general support by the panel for the compatibility and proportional relationship of the new addition to the heritage buildings.

Some panel members supported potentially a higher building with a 12-11-10 stepping to enable further sculpting of the massing and address the 0-lot line condition.

General panels comments noting that the massing and form needs further design development.

A panelist noted the density appears to be bleeding onto the second volume.

Many panelists noted the setbacks in the plan are subtle; consider increasing this would make the concept and massing stronger.

A panelist noted the proposed form, scale and massing on the Cordova site is disconnected and disagrees with the design rational of the proposed stepping in the massing, the main focus of the building should be the lower part of the heritage buildings not to the skyline. The proposed building design does not contribute to the historic character.

Other panelists expressed concerns about supporting the additional height and massing volume on the West Cordova site.

Many panelists noted the relationship of the podium and tower on the West Hastings Street building should be simple.

Consider substantial stepping back for the additional massing, without occupying the whole parcel. Further exploration of the existing urban and neighbourhood context. This development possibly creates a 12-storey street wall condition.

Most of the panelists expressed concerns of the neighbouring sites to be undevelopable due to the proposed massing and Zero-Lot-Line conditions. Further design development is needed.

Further design development of sculpting the proposed massing considering the neighbourhood sites, may lose some density.

Overall support for the project and general concept based on revitalization of neighbourhood. Supports façade retention strategy. Agree with general comments on articulation along Cordova.

A panelist noted the proposed white volumes and reveals need to be treated differently to strengthen the breaks in massing.

A panelist noted the façade on West Hastings Street building to create bigger break/setback above the podium and use some more distinction, consider some more brick articulation.

A panelist asked for consideration of the orientation of the windows and unit above for privacy

Further exploration to address the base to maintain the simple grid but contributing more contextual response of adjacent buildings and increasing the reveal of podium-tower on West Hastings Street site, to reinforce street line.

Some of the panelists found the contribution to the historical character and fabric of Gastown generally successful but it is very important to understand the historical context of the site and surrounding neighborhood.

A few panelists noted it is important to consider if the architectural design fits with the adjacent architectural and historic design.

The contribution to the tower development and heritage streetscape was supported.

Many panel members noted there should be more access to sunlight throughout the project.

Disappointing to see all the non-market unit amenity spaces are down by the lane as they will get no sunlight at all.

Non-market units and amenities should not be treated differently. It is not equitable when the non-market units are dark and have a separate entry.

There should be further attention to accessibility within the units and consider consultation with people with disabilities, families, the elderly, all user groups.

Consider sculpting the lane frontage and create more space so that more space spills out from the retail to the lane, some panelists expressed non-support for the zero setback along laneway.

Consideration of the Gastown Public Space plan, the idea of proposing further activation along laneway including the connection from the proposed atrium space, and provide storage for garbage to reactive the lane successfully to help make it look cleaner.

A panelist noted the lane to retail to public realm interfaces need further design development and how one meanders through.

A panelist noted not enough information was given regarding the landscape architecture.

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

3. Address: 3398 North Arm Ave
Permit No.: DP-2023-00729
Description: The Vancouver Park Board is planning a new plaza and riverfront park in the East Fraser Lands (EFL), also known as the River District. This plaza and park, along with the new community centre, are part of the larger vision of parks and recreation spaces for the growing neighbourhood. The future community centre and plaza will be located between Oolichan Way to the west, Road G to the north, River District Crossing to the east. A new riverfront park will be located to the south of the plaza. The riverfront park will form part of a continuous stretch of parkland along the Fraser River from Kerr to Boundary Rd. The concepts for the plaza and park were created as part of the developer’s application to the City for a Preliminary Development Permit (PDP). Preliminary development permits are needed for complex projects like this one. The plaza and riverfront park will add approximately one and half hectares (over three and a half acres) of new parkland for the community.

Application Status: Preliminary Development Permit
Architect: HCMA Architecture + Design
Delegation: Alexandra Kenyan, Architect, HCMA
Laura Macdonald, Landscape Architect, Space to Play
Dean Johnson, Owner/Developer, Wesgroup Properties
Staff: Hamed Ghasemi, Eileen Finn, Katy Amon

EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (8/0)

Planner’s Introduction:

Hamed Ghasemi, Development Planner gave an overview of the neighbourhood context in relation to the proposal, followed by the expectations of the built-form guidelines for this project. Mr. Ghasemi 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 building interfaces (Community Center, Retail, and Pavilion) with the public realm including the plaza, and riverfront park;
2. Does the proposal for this **city-owned site** sufficiently address equity through design and programming? (ex. accessibility, inclusiveness, diversity, etc. ;). Are there specific areas where equity can be better addressed?
3. Please provide early advice on the architectural expression of the community center given the LEED Gold certification requirement as well as retail buildings including the proposed pavilion.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Applicant Alexandra Kenyon, Architect for HCMA noted the objectives and gave a general overview of the project followed by Laura Macdonald, Landscape Architect presenting on the landscape design.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **MS. LELE** and seconded by **MS. LONG** 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. Consider providing an accessible roof to the CRU;
2. Reconsider the location of the crane;
3. Consider the path to the dike, this should be pedestrian-focused;
4. Consider greater porosity and transparency at the ground level between the plaza and interior spaces;
5. Consider adding more delight in the architectural expression including the roofs;
6. Consider outdoor covered areas to act as transitional spaces from indoor and outdoor;
7. Consider space in the plaza for food trucks;;
8. Consider public access to washrooms, maybe in the community center with access from outside of the building;
9. There should be a greater reference to reconciliation and inclusivity.

Summary of Panel Commentary:

There was general support and enthusiasm for the project.

This is a good project for generations to come.

The panel noted the location of everything on the site makes sense and that consolidation of the parkade was a good move.

The panel noted landscape design is in the right direction and the two tiers of park area is a great idea. A panelist noted to consider moves in the planter walls.

Many felt the building was monotonous and a lost architectural opportunity. And, a panelist noted the building feels a little bit too heavy and opaque. Consider animating the building more (i.e. undulating the roof). Consider the geometry, shapes and interfaces of the building. The building can be animated through patterning, materiality, and color.

The renderings do not do justice to the material pallet.

The building needs to be delightful and have an openness and friendliness that feels inviting.

Consider prioritizing the view from inside the building, especially in Vancouver's climate.

A panelist noted the location of the building to the restaurant is not successful. Consider the orientation to bring the restaurant business closer to the street.

A panelist noted the roof is a lost opportunity.

Consider providing an accessible roof to the CRU.

Consider providing more retail opportunities near water. This can be done by providing more hard surfaces in the plaza to create space for food trucks.

Consider enclosing the mechanical units at both roofs, as you will have hi-rises looking down.

A panelist noted the building feels disconnected from the plaza at the lower level.

Consider some sort of covered outdoor spaces to make the plaza usable all year round. This can be weather-protected areas at the edges of the building and covered outdoor spaces in the plaza.

Is there a way to integrate the indoor and outdoor amenity spaces? The ground floor of the community center is disconnected from the plaza.

Consider the childcare center will need 8-9-foot fence at the edge of the outdoor space.

Childcare should present itself from the outside.

Consider signage and wayfinding throughout the site, such as the entrances and the washroom. The atrium is good for wayfinding of the community center. Consider signage for the restaurant.

Consider accessibility throughout the site.

Consider some engagement with Indigenous groups. Reconciliation should be more visible throughout the proposal.

The majority of the panelists noted to reconsider the location of the crane potentially use in the plaza as an active element. Consider working with an artist.

A panelist noted the pavilion, and its sculpted roofline is more important than the crane.

There were mixed reviews regarding the water feature. Some felt it was not needed others noted it is nice but keep it simple.

Consider the provision of a safe path for pedestrians to the dike, especially with bikes coming and some at full speed, this should be a pedestrian-focused area by providing special paving to connect the plaza to park and to slow down the bikes.

There are not enough spaces in Vancouver to view the water and engage in different ways,

consider more options to do so that are not private spaces.

Consider smaller-scale restaurants and food trucks, providing variety is important.
Consider lighting of the public outdoor spaces including the lighting of the crane for special events and festivals.

A panelist noted the landscape is successful. Support the small pockets that spill out.
A panelist noted to consider edible planting in relationship with the amenities (i.e. cooking), this could be part of the engagement plan.
Consider cultural planting.

A panelist noted that the parking should not be eliminated or reduced. Consider stalls for those with mobility issues.
These kinds of spaces are attracting big families of all generations, do not assume all can take transit.

A panelist noted that retail building is too huge compared to the community center building.
Break up the long façades to provide the visual appearance of two buildings.

A panelist noted that using the same materials for all three buildings is not a good move.

A panelist noted that if the passive house requirements is taking away the opportunity from the building, then perhaps should reconsider doing passive house at this location at all cost.
Consider consolidating the glazing, utilizing higher-performance glazing, and providing more fluidity for the parapet.

A panelist noted that the community center building needs to be softer in form to celebrate nature and its location.

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