

**URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES**

**DATE:** November 12, 2025

**TIME:** 3:00 pm

**PLACE:** Cascadia Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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<sup>st</sup> Ave
2. 80 Powell St

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 m<sup>2</sup>; 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.

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026

**TIME:** 3:00 pm

**PLACE:** Teams Meeting

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Tony Osborn (Chair)  
Allyse Li  
Ana Maria Llanos  
Aaron Petruic  
Mariyeh Sharifisaraei  
Grant Brumpton  
Scott Mitchell

**RECORDING P. ANALYST:** E. Garrido

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. <b>80 Powell St</b>

Chair Tony Osborn called the meeting to order at 3:00pm acknowledging that we are on the unceded traditional and ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. Noted the importance of the historic route of the railway, as an integral part of the settlement of this country which resulted in the displacement of indigenous communities.

<b>1. Address:</b>	<b>80 Powell St</b>
<b>Permit No.:</b>	DP-2025-00672
<b>Description:</b>	To develop a 13-storey mixed-use commercial building on 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 7.58 for the site; a proposed floor area of approximately 60,569.45 sq. ft. / 5,627.08 m <sup>2</sup> ; a proposed height of 137.5 ft./ 41.91 m; all over one level of underground parking, with vehicular access from the lane.
<b>Application Status:</b>	Complete Development Application
<b>Review:</b>	Second
<b>Architect:</b>	RH Architects
<b>Delegates:</b>	James Wu, RHA; Rick Michaels, John Atkin, Joseph Fry, HAPA.
<b>Staff:</b>	David Cha, Development Planner; Elijah Sabadlan, Heritage Planner.

### **EVALUATION: Support with Recommendations (6/1)**

#### **Planner's Introduction:**

David Cha, Development Planer, presented the revised development application, detailing changes made in response to previous Urban Design Panel feedback. explained the site's location along the historic CPR railway corridor, emphasizing its significance for public access, amenity, and legibility, and the city's practice of securing publicly accessible open space in exchange for additional building height.

#### **Applicant's Introductory Comments:**

John Atkin highlighted the site's unique diagonal alignment and its historical role as a portage route for local First Nations, reinforcing the importance of maintaining the open right of way. James and Joseph Fry described the revised design, including increased pedestrian access width, relocation of the parkade ramp, activation of blank facades, and integration of landscape features such as a green wall and tidal water feature; the ground floor and rooftop restaurant were positioned to maximize public space and connectivity, with material choices referencing Gastown's heritage and the Dominion Building.

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

- Please comment on how the revised proposal responds to the UDP's consensus recommendations.

**Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.****Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **Allyse Li** and seconded by **Scott Mitchel** 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 a more meaningful integration of the site's history, specifically regarding the sacrifices of the Chinese Canadian community.
2. Further study development of the building elevations to rationalize the randomness and integrate it within its heritage context.
3. Further study servicing needs, especially to ensure they don't conflict with the experience of the public plaza.
4. Exterior lighting to be further developed especially on the ground floor.

**Panel Commentary:**

The Urban Design Panel provided detailed feedback, raising concerns about historical reconciliation, facade articulation, operational clarity, public realm activation, and technical details, culminating in consensus recommendations for further design development and integration of site history.

Panelists questioned the hotel's operational details, including service access, mechanical systems, elevator overruns, and code compliance; Applicant clarified that service rooms and mechanical equipment would be in the basement, with allowances made in the design, and alternate code solutions such as water curtains were discussed for exit protection.

Emphasis was made on the need for the project to address the site's historical context, including the sacrifices of Chinese Canadian workers and indigenous displacement, suggesting that programming at the ground and second floors should integrate gestures of reconciliation and historical dialogue.

Panelists also critiqued the randomness of the fenestration and facade articulation, questioning the departure from Gastown's grid and advocating for a more rationalized, contextually grounded approach; recommendations included further study of window placement and material rigor.

Further develop unresolved issues regarding hotel servicing, lighting strategy, green wall

viability, and integration of mechanical and service elements, recommending that these aspects be carefully resolved to avoid conflicts with the public realm and ensure long-term durability.

Panelists acknowledged improvements in pedestrian circulation and ground floor openness but called for more robust strategies to ensure the space functions as a place for people to stay, not just pass through; suggestions included enhancing lighting, landscape detailing, and programming to support real users and activity over time.

The chair commented that the development of the upper portions of the building are positive but agreed with the rest of the panelists that they needed to be further justified and rationalized with their relationship to the heritage character of the neighborhood in which they exist.

The chair also commented that the building servicing needs lacked design development, especially as they might affect the pedestrian experience of the plaza. This project should serve as an anchor point or gateway to the collected series of public spaces on this rail line terminating at International Village. However, the utilitarian quality of the architecture and its footprint on the ground prevent it from functioning as the important gateway this site warrants.

The chair summarized the panel's consensus items, recommending support with conditions:

- Meaningful integration of site history
  - Rationalization of the random patterning on the building facades
  - Careful study of servicing needs, and
  - Further development of exterior lighting.
- **Site History Integration:**  
Consider a more meaningful integration of the site's history, specifically regarding the sacrifices of the Chinese Canadian community, into the project design and programming.
  - **Facade Design Development:**  
Further study and rationalize the randomness of the building elevations to better integrate with the heritage context.
  - **Servicing and Public Plaza Interface:**  
Further study and resolve servicing needs, especially to ensure they do not conflict with the experience of the public plaza.
  - **Exterior Lighting Strategy:**  
Further develop the exterior lighting strategy, especially at the ground floor, to ensure safety and ambiance.

The motion was moved, seconded, and supported by all panelists except The Chair.

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