

## URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

**DATE:** December 2, 2015

**TIME:** 3:00 pm

**PLACE:** Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

**PRESENT:** MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:  
Russell Acton  
Stefan Aepli  
Stuart Hood  
Ken Larsson (excused for item #2)  
Arno Matis  
Chris Mramor  
Muneesh Sharma  
Roger Hughes  
Neil LaMontagne  
Julien Fagnan

**REGRETS:** Matthew Soules  
Meghan Cree-Smith  
Jennifer Marshall

**RECORDING  
SECRETARY:** Sally Hiller

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### ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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|----|---|
| 1. | 800 West Georgia Street (Vancouver Art Gallery - North Plaza) |
| 2. | 1550 Alberni Street   |
| 3. | 105 Keefer Street and 544 Columbia Street                     |
| 4. | 1111 Richards Street (formerly 508 Helmcken Street)           |
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**BUSINESS MEETING**

Chair Marshall called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. There being no New Business the meeting considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 800 West Georgia Street (Vancouver Art Gallery - North Plaza)  
DE: DE418585  
Description: Exterior alterations to the north plaza of the Vancouver Art Gallery.  
Zoning: CD-1  
Application Status: Complete Development Application  
Review: First  
Architect: Nick Milkovich Architects Inc. (Nick Milkovich and Hiroko Kobayashi)  
Owner: Province of British Columbia  
Delegation: Nick Milkovich, Nick Milkovich Architects Inc.  
Joseph Fry, HAPA Collaborative  
Staff: Anita Molaro and Patrick O'Sullivan

**EVALUATION: SUPPORT (6-0)**

- **Introduction:** Patrick O'Sullivan, Development Planner, introduced the project as a development permit application for exterior alterations to the North Plaza of the Vancouver Art Gallery. The scope of work area extends to the curbs on Hornby, Georgia and Howe Streets; just past the Edward VII monument and along Howe St, just past the capsule-shaped planter.

The North Plaza is owned by the Province of British Columbia and leased to the City for use. Activities on the North Plaza are currently coordinated by the City. The space hosts about fifty recurring events annually, plus demonstrations, memorials and other programmed events. The applicant is the City (Facilities and Real Estate Services), and the design team.

Other significant buildings in the area include the Hotel Vancouver, Cathedral Place, the HSBC Atrium, the Hotel Georgia, the TD Tower, Nordstrom, and of course the Art Gallery Building itself.

A report was sent to Council in November 2012 on a Strategy for Moving Towards a Public Plaza. This followed a public engagement process that collected public feedback on desired features for a plaza redesign.

The consultant team created three design options for discussion based on public feedback from the October 2012 Block 51 process where people were asked how they would use the spaces around the gallery. The design options also utilized data from a detailed site analysis, and best practices review of comparable urban plazas. In the end no single concept plan was preferred, so the proposed design includes features that were generally requested or valued with elements of openness and flexibility. These include seating, trees, and shelter.

The entire plaza has also been re-graded and resurfaced with precast concrete and stone pavers to create a single surface. The fountain, a number of retaining walls and the driveway will be removed. The plaza will have an open center, a new pavilion, and a perimeter edge defined by landscaping and a canopy element.

The central field is a trapezoid paver layout with coral granite accent pieces. Also proposed are extensions of the existing Robson Square paving along Howe, Hornby and Georgia Streets. Mast lighting is being proposed to provide everyday evening-use lighting; these will also be programmable as theatrical lighting sources for events.

Furniture includes moveable chairs and tables, as well as a variety of fixed bench shapes and configurations. The benches will be of different lengths and be made of 4x9 and 4x4 cedar members, with some having cedar timber backrests.

Two trees are to be retained and protected south of the monument. Armstrong Red Maple trees will be installed along Hornby Street to extend the existing pattern of maples. Eddies White Wonder trees will be used in the island seating, and flowering plum trees, magnolias, and seasonal planting will be used in benches along Georgia Street.

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

1. Please comment on how well the proposal satisfies the stated primary goal: to create Vancouver's preeminent and most compelling public square.
  2. Please comment on how the proposal responds to:
    - a. its immediate context (buildings, planting, surfaces, edges, and existing design language of Robson Square)
    - b. the square's role in the larger city
  3. Please comment on the overall landscape design including the configuration of spaces; choice of materials and plant selection; type of and quantity of seating; lighting approach; and its success as a flexible, safe and inviting public space.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team introduced the project as progressing a three-block continuum which was started in 1973. This project design has been informed by a lot of discourse and public events, and visiting plazas in other cities along the coast to examine them and how they are managed.

The site can accommodate between 5,000 to 6,000 people, and is a space that everybody wants to be in. However, the current condition of the site compromises its ability to function as an event space.

The space is being looked at as part of the ceremonial experience along Georgia Street, along with its use as a linkage to Coal Harbour and False Creek. The aim is to continue the three blocks of Robson Square into this area, through a series of pavilions and plants. A contemporary approach has been taken as precedents have already been set for the site.

The concept for the site utilizes an idea of a room within a room, with canopies and trees used to articulate the space. Aside from the large spaces there are also intimate spaces which are designed to allow people to capture sunshine. There is a lot of social confetti in the form of movable tables and chairs, and the fountain has been removed, increasing flexibility of the space.

Local wood will be used to make benches and platforms, with a thick and sturdy structural quality. Retractable bollards will protect the vault space from traffic. There will also be raised planters along the edges, and maple trees between Robson and Georgia Streets.

The applicant team took questions from the panel members.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - This should be seen as Phase One; when the paving actually extends to the face of Hornby and Howe, and across to Georgia St, then it truly does become a central place in the city
  - Further consideration is needed in terms of plaza surface materials. Concrete is too temporary as a material; consider using granite for durability and longevity
  - The wooden benches should be revisited
  - Concern that the pavilion is not of a public scale, and should be larger
  - Further design development of the corner at the monument is recommended. the cladding of the stair seems marooned and does not tie into the design of the plaza, and the bench does not work
  - The corners at Hornby and Howe Streets (and at Georgia Street) need to be more porous to allow people into the plaza
  - Focus on the detailing as this is what will make the plaza
- **Related Commentary:** There was positive support generally from the Panel. It is really Canadian in its approach; quiet and understated, and flexible. It has achieved the main goal of supporting gatherings within the City. The design rationale is well considered. The space management approach is terribly critical. How the space is used and allowed to be used will be the test of its success. An open, urban square is the right response. It was suggested that layers of history be incorporated to the site.

There was some Panel concern about the size of the Pavilion. The scale of pavilion and trees on the east side is too small, and not at the scale of a square. Ten foot is not a public scale pavilion, it needs to be amplified. The pavilion should be a brash, young city voice of Vancouver.

Regarding the monument, it was suggested that the area around it could be a contemplative zone. Further design development of the corner at the monument is recommended. The cladding of the stair seems marooned and does not tie into the design of the plaza, and the bench does not work. The treatment of the monument constricts flow. The Automated Public Toilet should not be near the public monument, they should be situated by the area where the food trucks park.

It was commented that the brightness of the paving is spot on. It was suggested that how the two types of paving patterns blend together be revisited, and that the linear paving should wrap around the edges of the building.

In terms of the landscape design, it was suggested that the scale of the trees be looked at in the context of creating flow through space. Panel comments varied regarding the Georgia Street edge. There was some support for keeping the edge really open, and others suggesting enclosing it. The stairs and art should be viewable from the street. Seating is congested at the corners which might restrict movement. Have open corners for crowd control. The street edges need to be compelling and open.

Planting seems a little skimpy; consider strengthening the frame with big trees. A stronger statement is needed at the north side at the central axis. It was suggested that treating the shoulder zone between the street and the sidewalks in a more Robson Square-material way would tie it in more. The tree bosqueis beautiful.

There was Panel support of the continuation of the alley.

The materiality and construct of the wooden benches was not supported by the Panel. The benches should have some whimsy and delight; currently they do not go with the paving pattern and seem foreign and more appropriate for a park than a plaza. They look a little veneer and applique. Consider merging the classical and the modern. These types of benches are expected in Vancouver, and tend to be flat and uncomfortable. The management and reliability of the movable chairs and tables is very important.

The Panel supported the great approach and flexibility of the lighting design, and suggested this could be even further enhanced. It supports a variety of scenarios. The lighting will create atmosphere and activity at night. The lighting should be surprising, engaging and compelling. This could go further and be more dramatic. Lighting is key to creating a safe, inviting space.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel and noted that the session was interesting. It was good to hear well considered feedback.

2. Address:	1550 Alberni Street
DE:	NA
Description:	To construct a 43-storey mixed-use building, including 188 residential units with retail at grade.
Zoning:	DD to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning Application
Review:	First
Architect:	Merrick Architecture (Greg Borowski)
Owner:	Westbank
Delegation:	Greg Borowski, Merrick Architecture Michael Sypkens, Kengo Kuma & Associates Kelty McKinnon, PFS Studio Landscape Architect Ian Gillespie, Westbank James Cheng, James K.M. Cheng Architects
Staff:	Linda Gillan and Colin King/Sailen Black

#### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Linda Gillan, Rezoning Planner, introduced the rezoning application for 1550 Alberni Street.

The site is located on the southeast corner of Alberni Street and Cardero Street, with a frontage of 158 ft. on Alberni, and 131 ft. on Cardero. The site is 20,700 sq. ft. in size and is currently occupied by an eight-storey office building.

This application is being considered under the Rezoning Policy for the West End, and the West End Community Plan.

The site is part of the Georgia Corridor area of the West End Plan. For sites with a minimum frontage of 130ft., rezoning applications can be considered for:

- Market residential,
- With heights of up to 500 ft. subject to view corridors,
- Typical tower floor plates of 6,500 sq. ft.

The Green Buildings Policy for Rezonings also applies to this site, requiring a minimum of LEED Gold or equivalent.

The application is to rezone from DD (Downtown District) to CD-1 to allow for a 43-storey mixed-use building, with 41-storeys of market residential and commercial uses at grade along Cardero and Alberni streets. There is a proposed total floor area of 290,000 sq. ft. (residential/commercial), with a density of 14 FSR and height of 133.3 m (437 ft.).

The proposal is for a total of 188 residential units; parking access is proposed from the lane.

The site slopes down approximately 3.5 m (11.5 ft.) from the southeast corner at the lane, to the northwest corner at Alberni and Cardero Streets. The lane is 33 foot wide lane. Cardero and Nicola Streets, to the east and west of the site, are local bikeways.

There is a nearby rezoning application for 1575 West Georgia St (NE corner of Georgia & Cardero, currently a three-storey concrete office.

Downtown Official Development Plan classifies this as Downtown District Area G (up to 6 FSR total, maximum discretionary heights of 450 feet).

View Protection Guidelines are applicable to view cones B1, C1, and 3.2.1 limits height to approximately 438 feet.

The commercial streets recommendation is for buildings to be set back to allow 5.5 metres (18 feet) of open space for pedestrian use between the existing curb and start of a building.

### Rezoning Policies and Guidelines

Built Form Guidelines in the Plan include the following three design principles of note:

- Ensure that new development does not adversely impact shadowing on recognized public open space and village areas as a performance measure to ensure that these spaces have solar access when citizens are typically more active
- New development should be responsive to adjacent and nearby private views by shaping built form to optimize performance. Responsive building forms can help achieve a distinctive architectural identity
- New development needs to contribute to public realm vitality by contributing active uses towards pedestrian interest as well as thoughtful building, tenancy and related public realm design quality.

The West End Development Plan also established adjacent C-6 zoning on Robson Street offering up to 8.75 FSR / 300 feet tall for developments creating new social or rental housing. Of note is that towers above 60 foot should provide horizontal separation of 80 foot to other towers, to allow light and views between them. Given the minimal lane setback shown, proposal suggests that redeveloped 1555 Robson Street tower element would have to be set back 47 foot from the lane.

The Rezoning Policy for the West End supports the rezoning for market residential but recommends a maximum floor plate of up to 603.9 m<sup>2</sup> (6,500 sq. ft.), to support light and air movement.

Regarding the form and massing, the tower separation above 60ft. is in-line with policies and guidelines for the adjoining parcel.

In terms of the floor plate, levels 6-15 and floors 27-41 exceed the maximum floor plate expectations of the West End Plan and rezoning policy of 603.9 m<sup>2</sup> (6,500 sq. ft.). The average floor area for all floors is 6,673 sq. ft., with plates such as at level 32, up to 7,072 sq. ft.

Proposed sculpting of built form at upper levels is intended to preserve sunlight access to sidewalks as well as public and private views.

Varying the tower floor-plates sizes can be considered subject to evaluation of the resultant massing and its effect on light and views.

Nineteen percent of floor plates have balconies, rather than the typical exclusion of twelve percent. Note that FSR of fourteen includes balcony space over twelve percent in floor area calculation.

A two-storey penthouse floor with stairs in units, assume no elevator overrun is required. No intrusion is permitted into the view cone.

Given orientation of open space at grade and proposed pedestrian routes, the applicant may wish to comment on how the proposed design will work in terms of pedestrian legibility and explain how daylight penetration to the Japanese garden area works.

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

1. Does the Panel support the overall form of development, including the proposed height (437 ft.), setbacks (zero at the lane, 6.7 ft. on Alberni St, and 2 ft. on Cardero), and density (14 FSR)?
  2. Considering the intents of policy for the West End to maintain natural light and views by limiting floor plate sizes to 6,500 sq. ft., does the Panel support the applicant's rationale for increasing plate sizes as shown?
  3. Given the increased pedestrian amenity and commercial activity expected along Cardero Street, does the Panel support the proposed public realm interface on this street?
  4. Considering the proposed relationship to the nearby site of 1555 Robson Street (the site across the lane), does the Panel support the proposed lane interface?
  5. Are there any other comments on the landscape or architectural design proposed in this rezoning application, in general?
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** Bridging the natural and the organic; the mountains and the built form, were the main drivers for this development.

The form is derived from the surrounding context, with the form shaped by its natural environment; the sun angles, temperature, water currents, humidity. The articulation creates an ephemeral, temporal quality to the façade on one hand, contrasting with the warm wood expression of the balconies. This has been articulated in a shingle format, referencing a certain vernacular in this region that is very practical in terms of drainage, and has a way of reflecting light that is different from the way a flat panel will reflect light. Glass and anodised aluminum panels will create constantly shifting qualities of light reflection with changes in the weather.

From every angle the form has a different quality; there is a sensuous curvature to the building, there is a subdued quality. The sculptural form is quite logical in construction; diagonally symmetrical.

The building recesses from the adjacent towers. It creates frames of space and linkages. It creates an entrance way into the city, and enhances the stroll along Cardero and along Alberni to Lost Lagoon.

The design process was driven by the deductive optimisation of Alberni Street. The carving in the lower part of the form allows views to open up and light to come into Alberni Street, creating an urban space with lobby and a big Japanese garden at ground level on one side, and a tree-lined promenade with canopy and retail alongside the scoop on the other.

The lobby on Alberni Street shows views through to the parkade ramp, creating a visual transparency between the front and the back.



All vehicular traffic, access, drop offs, loading and parking has been pushed to the back lane. This creates two distinct characters to the building, the quiet front and the vehicular rear.

The urban space at the base of the tower is open, with an alignment of bamboo and art work, that creates a good feeling; something that both the public and residents can see and experience.

A partial amphitheatre has been created around the moss garden for people to sit, there is Vals stone paving, and a piano that can be moved into this space for performances.

A bamboo forest only accessible from a private second floor is imbedded with a children's play area.

Sidewalks will be expanded and new street trees proposed to replace the current ones which are not thriving.

The applicant took questions from the Panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - The pedestrian amenity is visual, and it is important for the public to potentially experience it
  - The bamboo is not good for CPTED (safety) as it creates a forest that you have to walk through at night, and potentially makes it unsafe for women in the area. It also creates a barrier to people being able to appreciating the building, and should be considered further
  - The decking is not good for certain types of footwear
  - Do not lose the expression of the building with the penthouse views
  - The articulation of the columns is important as they are the basis of the project; do not obviate them
  - The passive response could be improved in the façade development; maybe the pixilation is too busy
  - Improve the glazing performance where there is continuous glazing, and consider pool condensation
  - Consider how the water feature will appear aesthetically in dry conditions.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel generally supported the Kengo Kuma design, and commented positively that it brings a sensitivity and poetry to the duality of urbanity and nature, from which the best architecture emerges. It is thoroughly researched and sculpturally beautiful. It is a high caliber design that brings west coast modernism into this time and place.

The Panel supported the overall form of development, including height, density or massing. Concerns were expressed that the setbacks were tight. Consider repositioning the tower away from the lane. The setbacks are tight on Cardero and the lane. Moving parking access is the best option. Animating the sidewalk with seating and cafes is great but it should be on your property.

The Panel supported the floor plate variance, as it is a very clever solution and it works well.

The Panel supported the proposed public realm interface and offered suggestions. Visual amenity is about art and design and having a feeling of excitement and is something which is really needed in the city. Consider improving visual access as it is important for the public to be able to experience the space. The carved sculptural element is very powerful. Try and achieve some tables along the boulevard to activate the street further. The Cardero setbacks could be more expansive and do not work as shown.

Concern was expressed that the decking is not safe for stilettos.

Overall the Panel supported the setback to the lane interface at 1555 Robson Street. When developed, the site across the street will have to respond sensitively to this development. Some concern was expressed that the lane was too tight and should be rethought.

The Panel expressed a range of views on the bamboo at street level. The thickness of the bamboo is tricky; the thin depth might not be enough, but too thick would be to miss out on the beautiful materiality and art. Consider alternatives that show you peek-a-boo views, and perhaps some areas that are more open. The bamboo is not good for safety as it creates a forest that has to be walked through at night.

The Panel commented on detailing of the building. Opacity of panel is needed to get a void read at the penthouse level. The columns are a dominant feature and how they are finished and expressed is important. The pixilation could be calmer.

The podium is well thought through and much appreciated. The play space feels left over and would not fully function without an amenity space with it. It needs to be bigger if it is required or desired.

In terms of sustainability, the balconies have been dealt with well. A passive response to dealing with sun could be improved in facade development; perhaps vary shingle angle. Look at improving glazing performance at continuous glazing areas, including at the pool, as condensation on glazing needs to be considered. Consider how the water feature will deal with drought esthetically.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team noted that the comments were excellent, and that it is still early so the project will keep improving.

3. Address:	105 Keefer Street and 544 Columbia Street
DE:	NA
Description:	To develop a 13-storey mixed-use building including 127 residential units, 25 senior social housing units, and commercial on the first two floors.
Zoning:	HA-1A to CD-1
Application Status:	Rezoning Application
Review:	First
Architect:	Merrick Architecture (Greg Borowski)
Owner:	Beedie Living
Delegation:	Greg Borowski, Merrick Architecture Bruce Hemstock, PWL Partnership Houtan Kafii, Beedie Living Daniel Roberts, Kane consulting
Staff:	Karen Hoese, Yan Zeng and Paul Cheng

#### EVALUATION: NON-SUPPORT (2-6)

- **Introduction:** Zan Yeng, Rezoning Planner, and Paul Cheng, Development Planner, introduced the rezoning application at 105 Keefer Street and 544 Columbia Street.

The subject site is at the northeast corner of Keefer Street and Columbia Street. It has approximately a 149-foot frontage along Keefer, and a 121-foot frontage along Columbia. Currently it is a vacant site with a surface parking lot.

The site is facing the Chinatown Memorial Plaza; a triangular-shaped public open space. Adjacent to it is a 50-foot frontage surface parking lot. Beyond that is a rehabilitated heritage building.

Directly across from Columbia Street is the Chinese Cultural Centre building and the entrance to Dr. Sun Yat Sun Park. Directly across from Keefer Street is the five-storey mall and parking structure.

The subject site is currently zoned HA-1A, one of the two Chinatown district schedules. The application is to rezone from HA-1A to Comprehensive Development (CD-1). The application is being considered under the Council approved *Rezoning Policy for Chinatown South (HA-1A)*.

Under the HA-1A, the maximum permitted height of development is up to 27.4 m (90'). There is no maximum permitted density provision under the district schedule. Achievable density would be commensurate with the form of development. Under the *Rezoning Policy for Chinatown South*, consideration of up to 36.6 m (120') may be considered for this site subject to urban design and all applicable policies and guidelines. Achievable density would be commensurate with the form of development that is supported.

It is the additional height of 30', which is between 90' and 120', which necessitates this proposal going through a rezoning process. The other aspects of the proposal, including the proposed land uses, are consistent with what would be permitted under HA-1A.

The proposal is for commercial at grade, facing both Keefer and Columbia, then wrapping around the corner and extending into the lane. Residential units will occupy levels two to thirteen. Twenty-five senior affordable housing units, operated by a non-profit housing operator are proposed for level two. Level three and up are residential strata units.

Parking is provided underground and accessed off the lane. The residential lobby is accessed off to the side of the building along Keefer Street. There is also a residential amenity room facing the lane.

The key urban design review areas for consideration include form of development, contextual fit, etc. The application has shown more detailed information on their rezoning application package, as a response to current discussion on Chinatown character. However, it should be noted that if the rezoning application gets approval from Council, the Panel will be seeing this application again at Development Permit stage to further review design development.

There are two zones in Vancouver's Chinatown; HA-1 and HA-1A. HA-1 is attributed to the more historic area along Pender Street, where less building height is permitted than HA-1A.

In April 2011, Council approved the final implementation of the Historic Area Height Review relating to the Chinatown Historic Area. Under this review, Council approved policies to consider rezonings of up to 120-foot in the HA-1A district, with key sites along Main Street identified for rezoning up to 150-foot. This project represents the third application to come in under this rezoning policy.

The proposal is for a thirteen storey mid-rise, visually-preceded by a street-wall of varying heights along Keefer and Columbia Streets. One of the challenges of these rezoning sites is the reconciliation of a new 120-foot building in a historic neighbourhood of 50-foot tall buildings. This proposal has introduced a design strategy which uses the street-wall podium to respond to the historical context, while setting back the "tower" element from the perimeter of the site in order to be visually subservient as seen from the nearby public sidewalks, while still maintaining visual prominence when viewed from a far distance.

Furthermore, the street-wall strives to achieve compatibility with the historical context while the tower element emulates a more contemporary expression.

During this rezoning process, the applicant and staff have undergone an in-depth discussion concerning Chinatown character with the City's advisory groups (Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee, APC, Vancouver Heritage Commission, Urban Design Panel), as well as with members of the local community and the city-wide design community. Design concerns emerged as some of the most important elements of Chinatown's character; some architectural in nature but also elements that pertain to the pedestrian experience of Chinatown. These elements include the following:

- Narrow street frontages of 25 or 50-foot wide lots, which result in small, fine-grained urban fabric, small shop-fronts and locally-owned businesses. Also a variegated saw-tooth parapet line along any given street block,
- Operable cloth awnings. This is one of those elements that affect the intangibles rather than simply of visual aesthetic value. Shop-fronts spill their merchandise out onto the sidewalk thereby contributing to the sights, smells and sounds and messy vitality that is associated with Chinatown. The versatility of retractable awnings is a direct response to this phenomenon where the merchandise needs to be protected from sun and rain, while during other weather conditions the awnings can be retracted for a more open experience,

- Activation of the rear service lane with commercial uses, wherever possible,
- Signage. Neon, bright and larger than elsewhere in the city, often with Chinese characters on them,
- Non-residential uses above the ground storey such as community clubhouses, small businesses, etc.,
- Vertical expression, and strong cornices and parapets on historic buildings,
- Recessed balconies and the use of masonry for exterior cladding that results in a firmness and substantiality to the building expression,
- Overall, the historic buildings offer a kind of visual richness that is often no longer seen during the modernist-era of architectural practice.

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

1. In considering context and neighbours, are the proposed setback and architectural expression of the higher building appropriate, in terms of:
    - Achieving a clear, visual legibility between the street-wall character and the upper building character?
    - Minimising impacts on the adjacent building, nearby public realm, and other private properties?
    - Enforcing the intended street-wall datum of 70 to 90 feet in HA1A?
  2. Does the proposed architectural expressions of the street-wall expression along Keefer and Columbia Streets, successfully achieve compatibility with the visual richness that is emulated by the historical buildings in the neighbourhood?
  3. Does the proposed upper building massing produce an interesting architectural expression and legible profile when viewed from a distance, such as from the Sea Wall or Andy Livingston Park?
    - Please provide commentary to the proposed lower-street facades and the response to the HA-1A guidelines
  4. Is there anything else that could be considered to give higher activation for this plaza, make it more meaningful in its interaction with other buildings around it, or any improvements that could be made through this rezoning application for the plaza?
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** In terms of the building massing, the centre of mass has been shifted to the east. The purpose, and the stepping back, was to have an effect similar to a 90 foot building, as viewed from the Sun Yet-Sen. The twenty-five foot module and the variation in brick colour were important to integrate in with the character of Chinatown.

A richness and variety in colour and detail, with individual canopy expressions, creates the feeling of multiple buildings, despite this being a single building. Variegated parapet heights were used to create variety in rooflines.

The façade details give the impression of a softly lit carpet. Thick and thin lines are used since they are prevalent in Chinatown. There is modulation in the mullions.

Looking at the top of the building, there is an opportunity to have a small poem which will be perceived from as far back as the Olympic Village. The hint of the poem from Chinatown will draw people in from the seawall.

A neon sign is proposed for the vertical portion of the exterior wall, which could be seen from Quebec Street. There will be a lot of public art, and electrical and water connections for events in the plaza.

There is a passageway going through the site which is not a public right-of-way, but which provides a sense of passage, with screening through to the lane.

There will be a floor of senior housing, with twenty-five units, and a senior's amenity space. There is an amenity off the alley in order to activate it. In keeping with a common theme of the area, there is bamboo and a ginkgo tree, as well as a paper-bark maple. Their location relates to other forms in Chinatown. Looking from above, there is Chinese symbology which announces the presence of Chinatown to those in the building.

There is an amenity space that is broken up using the square, has criss-crossing Chinese lanterns, and places to sit, and places to barbeque. There is a rear senior's patio space, with space for social activities and a sunny patio space facing out across the Dr. Sun Yet-Sen Gardens.

The character of the sidewalk turns the corner, and the lane carries the materials through, with the trees acting as a buffer to the excitement, allowing the Memorial Plaza to be just that. Living in this building should make you aware that you are in Chinatown.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - The project lacks clarity and does not have a sense of itself, due to its detailed response to the guidelines
  - There is a scale expression issue, and currently there is too much going on
  - The building looms over the Sun Yet-San Gardens and its surrounding context
  - The building is not responsive to the immediate context. Consider bringing it down in height at the corner
  - The twenty-five foot rhythm is good, but the spirit of Chinatown is not expressed in this project
  - The senior's amenity on the lane in the shade is not in an appropriate location; a better location would be off Memorial Plaza
  - Consider changing the massing, and so it starts to more positively inflect the street and how the memorial square is informed
  - Have a calmer and clearer sense of what the building is, rather than a detailed response to the guidelines.
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel agreed that the applicant had checked all of the boxes in response to the guidelines, however in doing so the spirit of Chinatown was not expressed in the design. The constraints of the guidelines developed outside of the context of this project do not necessarily lead to good architecture. It was commented that the project was affected by 'plannertect', whereby the architect's hands were tied in coming up with solutions because of the guidelines. There is more repetition as opposed to a contemporary reinterpretation of the Chinatown character.

The surrounding context is rich and complex, and is an incredible opportunity. The building expression is currently too busy. A more contemporary and simplified expression should be considered. The saw-tooth element adds too much complexity on a building of this scale and it seems a bit over-articulated at times. The parcel pattern is problematic, and the overall strategy does not support this twenty-five foot context.

More of a contrast and legibility between the upper and lower mass could be beneficial, but massing needs to be simplified dramatically to visually recede. It is almost as though the building is a village itself as it has so much going on. Consider calming the massing to provide more contrast with the street-wall. Bringing light through the building is a fantastic idea that should be more thoroughly explored in massing.

In terms of height, it was commented that along Columbia Street the building looms a bit too large over the Sun Yet-San Garden context. It is too tall. The cascading canopies add negatively to height and bulk. Reducing the height a little would be welcome.

It was suggested that the project needed to be broken up into two to three buildings which work together, but respond uniquely to their context and position on the block. Scale is the issue. Trying to make the large site consolidation appear as smaller buildings broken up by differing facades is not the answer. The project does not fit comfortably on the site.

The senior's housing is very positive and adds to the neighbourhood, however it was suggested that it is not well placed at the second level. Consider moving the senior's housing to the third floor, and preserving the second as commercial, in keeping with Chinatown.

The Panel agreed that the senior's amenity was good, however the location on the north-side needed to be reexamined. Consider shifting this to the south plaza side, possibly with recessed terrace. The laneway is difficult without solar access, and an amenity there might be underutilized.

There was some concern expressed about the Columbia/Keefer corner at the plaza. Consider adding some clarity and lightness. Consider eliminating the recess on Columbia Street and redistributing to the plaza. Redistribute setbacks and recession to plaza side and integrated to either a slightly bigger residential lobby or a bigger retail terraces.

It was also commented that Columbia Street would do better with a continuous street-wall, even possibly up the lane, and that being able to see the project from False Creek was good.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the Panel for their comments. They noted that the conversation was very interesting and the points were appreciated. The site is challenging and dramatic. There is a delicate balance between the expectations of the community and design professionals, and the role of professionals is to respond to that. Originally there was a more abstract approach which has changed over time; in the context of Chinatown there is a high level of detail which the project has been forced to respond to. Certainly the points raised will be seriously thought about.

This project has gone through a lot of public consultation, and is in an exceedingly complicated neighbourhood and made it very challenging to strike a balance. The comments about the senior's amenity area appreciated, but there was not a requirement to holding workshops or have senior's housing.

The whole project has been a question of balancing consideration. All of the boxes have been ticked, as without any one this project would not have worked. An attempt has also been made to try to give back to as many groups as possible and not alienate any one.



4. Address:	1111 Richards Street (formerly 508 Helmcken Street)
DE:	DE419710
Description:	To construct a 35-storey mixed-used building including 388 dwelling units with commercial space and a child daycare on the ground floor.
Zoning:	CD-1
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	Third (first as development application)
Architect:	GBL Architects (Joey Stevens)
Owner:	Brenhill
Delegation:	Stu Lyon, GBL Architects Joey Stevens, GBL Architects Chris Phillips, PFS Studio Landscape Architects Max Kerr, Brenhill
Staff:	Sailen Black

#### EVALUATION: SUPPORT (5-1)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Senior Development Planner introduced the project as a development permit application, following on from the rezoning of the site formerly known as 508 Helmcken.

Downtown South area policies apply to this site. Nearby towers are permitted up to 300 feet tall. The site is encumbered by two view cones which go over the top of it. View corridor "F" extending from Choklit Park to Grouse Mountain, caps the height of the building to approximately 324 feet. The second view corridor "C 2.1" from Laurel Landbridge to Crown limits a portion at the corner to approximately 266 feet in height.

Downtown South Guidelines recommend:

- Tower plate of no more than 6,500 sq. ft. area
- Podium base to form a well-defined street wall set back twelve feet from the property line to accommodate a double row of street trees and a transition area from the public to private realm
- The recommended maximum dimension of towers is ninety feet across.

Rezoning of the site increased permitted height and density, in connection with construction of new social housing building across the street at 1099 Richards. CD-1 on site now permits up to 17.1 FSR and 320 ft. in height. The form was designed to fit below and to the side of the two view cones over the site.

Of note is that delivery of 1099 Richards Street (across the street) and the relocation of the tenants of the Jubilee house are required before the issue of development permit for 1111 Richards Street.

In terms of the immediate contact of the area, Jubilee House is currently occupying the site, across the lane is Brookland Court; also social housing. A greenway is planned for north side Helmcken and a bike lane planned for Richards Street.

CD-1 zoning approved in principle has established a permitted density and height. Approval in principle was for a similar tower form, with variations permitted at the discretion of the DP Board and in fulfillment of recommended conditions of approval. Including the provision of a twelve foot setback from the street to permit double row of street trees.

The proposal is to construct a 35-storey mixed-use building including 388 dwelling units with commercial space and a child daycare on the ground and second floor.

The form of development at rezoning was notable for being a tower of 125 ft. wide, with floor plates of 10,130 sq. ft. area, extending up for 36 stories.

The floor plans above level six were fairly consistent from floor to floor with some variations in balcony design and a chamfer at level twenty-seven.

The new DE application presents a more articulated shape in elevation, which has been expressed as three distinct elements when seen from the Richards and Helmcken sides. The Seymour facing side is more consistent from floor to floor.

Along with this articulation, the upper portion of the tower has increased to a maximum width of 128 ft., and the depth is reduced by 4 ft., while floor plates at upper levels have increased to approximately 11,846 sq. ft. This is a change of 1,716 sq. ft. from rezoning.

Shadow studies at rezoning indicated that at 10:00 am, a portion of the park would be shadowed. The DE application proposes to increase the duration of shadowing on the park in the morning, estimated by the applicant at about ten minutes.

As proposed, private view impacts would be affected, with improvement for some residents and greater impacts to others such as 1088 Richards Street.

Twelve foot setbacks are provided as recommended on Richards Streets, with smaller than Guideline setbacks on the north 1/3 of Helmcken reflecting the Brookland Court setback.

In response to a recommended condition of approval to provide space for the typical Downtown South treatment including a double row of street trees, the DE proposes to set the southern 2/3 back from Helmcken at the lower eight stories. Upper levels would cantilever back over the treed area.

A Montessori pre-school is proposed on the bottom two floors facing into the park, with commercial spaces and the entry lobby facing onto Richards Street.

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

Comments are sought on the landscape and architectural design of this complete development permit application, and in particular:

1. Does the Panel support the tower sculpting on Helmcken Street in relation to the intended public realm interface for Downtown South?
2. Does the Panel support the proposed changes to the tower dimensions in terms of neighbourliness, including shadow and view impacts?
3. Does the Panel have any advice on the overall design with regard to the open space and landscape treatments?

4. Does the Panel support the exterior expression, in response to this unique site and context?

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** There are three unique contexts that converge on this site; the park, the urban grid and streetscape, and the Yaletown skyline. Our response to this was to break the building down into three unique components, each one expressing and responding to one of those contexts.

The park tower has been stepped down two storeys in height, and has a large rooftop amenity. The tower is primarily wrapped in balconies, broken into modules of eight. The Montessori school is located at the base of this tower, with a cantilevered box accent at the second floor, providing cover for the play area, and animates the park edge.

The base component takes a lot of cues from the heritage building next door, Brooklyn Court. Vertical bays of white masonry stone are used, and vertical aluminum fins provide solar shading, texture, and breakdown the massing.

There's a break between the base and the tower above and that allows for another roof top amenity space.

In terms of sustainability, a lot of solid wall has been used in the base, and a lot of thermal glazing has been used in the Yaletown tower. This performs better than a standard window wall. Extensive sun shading has been used to mitigate heat-gain. Mechanically, there is a geo-exchange heat pump and high efficiency fan coil units within each of the suits. There is a dedicated bike elevator on the corner which goes underground to bike parking.

A lot of effort has been put into the relationship between the building and the park. There is the idea of allowing the Montessori kids and restaurant to connect into the park.

The water feature requires access, and a lane has been layered with bollards to allow for vehicles access at times and keep it a pedestrian space at other times.

The bike elevator works best at Helmcken so it doesn't hinder the relationship to the park. Next to the park there are two great amenity spaces, and there is a rooftop garden for the rental area.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
  - The rental amenity is in the wrong location and needs to be bigger (no kitchenette, too small)
- **Related Commentary:** The Panel expressed support for the project overall, commenting that it was rigorous, refreshing, sculptural and attractive. The architect was commended for their design development and the drastic improvement. The geometry and colour pallet work very well. The project is "doing the right thing".

The tower sculpting was supported by the Panel. Breaking up of massing is very successful and is a substantial improvement.

The Panel supported the proposed changes to the tower dimensions. They are logical and smart. The animated ground floor and park work very well. Shape and form is very strong and works well in surrounding area.

Open space and exterior expression were generally supported. It is very successfully dealt with, particularly the park interface.

There were some concerns about the materiality of facades - (too dark and sharp, a bit ominous, the northern façade looks monotonous). Many panel members supported the diamond screen treatment as it is unique in the city and seems inventive way to provide solar screening.

The rental amenity needs some improvement. It is too small and not the right location for a deck. The rental common space is on the wrong corner of the building. Consider flipping it around to face the park and enlarge it.

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

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.