

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: September 7, 2016

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Town Hall Meeting Room, City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

David Jerke	Stefan Aepli (excused for item #1, 2 & 3)
Roger Hughes	Veronica Gillies (excused for item #4)
Russell Acton	Meredith Anderson (excused for item #3)
Ken Larsson	Karen Spoelstra (excused for item #1)
Neal LaMontagne	James Cheng (excused for item #4)

GUESTS:

Glenda Bartosh	Kim Maust
Mollie Massie	Alan Davies
Jenny Sandy	Richard Keates
Julia Hubert	Carol Sill
Braden Parker	Jan Fialkowski

REGRETS: Meghan Cree-Smith
Muneesh Sharma
Kim Smith

**RECORDING
SECRETARY:** Lidia McLeod

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

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| 1. | 4621-4663 Cambie Street & 605 W 31st Avenue |
| 2. | 3530 Sawmill Crescent (formerly 3599 E Kent Avenue North) |
| 3. | 1255 W Pender Street (formerly 1250 W Hastings) |
| 4. | 33 W Cordova Street (36 Blood Alley) |
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BUSINESS MEETING

Chair Hughes called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum. After a brief business meeting the panel considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

1. Address: 4621-4663 Cambie Street & 605 W 31st Avenue
Permit No. RZ-2016-00006
Description: The proposal is for two six-storey residential buildings (74 dwelling units total) over two levels of underground parking (157 vehicle spaces and 101 bicycle spaces) with maximum building heights of 21.0 m (69 ft.) and 21.5 m (71 ft.) and a floor space ratio (FSR) of 2.36. This application is being considered under the Cambie Corridor Plan.

Zoning: RS-1 to CD-1
Application Status: Rezoning Application
Review: First
Architect: IBI Group (Martin Bruckner)
Owner: Cressey Development Corporation
Delegation: Martin Bruckner, IBI Group
Tony Wan, IBI Group
Peter Kreuk, Durante Kreuk
Ben Fisher, Cressey Development

Staff: Zak Bennett and Marie Linehan

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Zak Bennett, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project as a rezoning application composed of four single-family parcels along the western side of Cambie Street, between 30th and 31st Avenues and opposite from Queen Elizabeth Park. The site is presently zoned RS-1 and is developed with single-family housing. It is approximately 36,637 sq. ft., with 322 ft. of frontage along Cambie and a variable site depth of 115-150 ft. An FSR of 2.36 is proposed.

Across the lane sites are zoned RS-1 and are included in Cambie Corridor Phase 3 (CC3) planning. Forms being considered include ground-oriented housing, though staff note that CC3 policy planning is still underway and final direction for these sites has not been determined. Sites on Cambie north to south are zoned RS-1 and can consider up to six-storeys. There is also a completed rezoning to the north (Empire) which consists of three six-storey residential buildings.

The proposal is for two six-storey residential buildings with a total of 74 units set over two levels of underground parking. The Cambie Corridor Plan seeks a pedestrian walkway along the western edge of the site and the proposal reflects this requirement. The walkway intends to align with Ash Street and provide a pedestrian connection between Queen Elizabeth Park, the green space at the corner of 31st Avenue and Cambie Street, and the neighbourhood.

The application is being considered under the Cambie Corridor Plan, which anticipates residential six-storey buildings in this area with a suggested FSR range of 1.5-2.0. The proposal calls for 157 residential parking stalls and space for 101 bicycles.

Marie Linehan, Development Planner, noted that this proposal is in the Queen Elizabeth section of the Cambie Corridor, with new mid-rise buildings on the west side of Cambie Street creating an edge to the park lands on the east side of Cambie. Proposals in this section should respond to the unique park adjacency, strengthen and enhance the green setting, and provide a sense of openness through the spacing between buildings and shorter building frontages.

In the Queen Elizabeth neighbourhood building frontages are expected to be a maximum of 120 ft. The proposed frontages are 120 ft. for the north building and 101 ft. at the south building. A 24 ft. courtyard separation is provided between the two buildings. Noting the shallower lot depth of 120 ft. at the north end, a separate row of townhouses at the lane was not required for this site.

A midblock pedestrian link was required at the west side and will extend through the CC3 sites to the rear and connect to Ash Street. The base is designed to have an active edge with two-storey townhouses fronting onto the pedestrian link.

Setbacks at the upper levels are intended to provide a four storey shoulder along Cambie Street and a three storey shoulder at the lane, the latter intended to assist in the transition to lower density sites to the rear. Front yard setbacks of 12 ft. are provided at the street frontages, with a framed balcony element extending into this setback at the corner at W 30th Avenue. The building turns the corner at W 30th with a two-storey portion extending towards the lane.

There is a grade change of about one-storey front to back at the site, with the lane being lower than the street. While the building is technically compliant as a six-storey building, the rear yard landscaping is terraced to screen the parkade level and to mitigate the appearance of a seven-storey form as viewed from the rear.

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

1. Orientation and form of the south building.
 2. Rear setbacks and transition to Phase III sites, noting the lower grades at the lane.
 3. Corner expression at West 30th.
 4. Overall amount of open space and greenery on the site including the design of the private courtyard.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team summarized the main design rationales of the project as laid out in the application booklet, and then took questions from the panel.
 - **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Improve the relationship of the two buildings through design development of the vertical brick elements;
 - Design development on the four-storey expression to make it feel less 'looming' next to the two-storey base adjacent the future CC3 sites to the west;
 - Re-think the wrap-around balcony on 30th Avenue;
 - Re-consider the building entries and central court area to allow for more mingling opportunities of social contact.
 - **Related Commentary:** The panel started by commending the applicant team on a handsome project with a lot of promise. While the design could be simplified and provide a better response to the park, it is good overall.

At the shoulder, on the west elevation, the four-storey massing appears to loom over the two-storey base. It may be possible to resolve this through a closer look at building depth. More stepping in the massing and increasing the use of vertical elements are also encouraged.

Currently the two buildings do not relate well together, and more of a connection is needed between them. The Entries are also too separated, and should be further integrated through the redesign of the adjacent front yard to encourage gathering.

There are a generous number of open spaces, but they currently seem a bit too separated and dark. Use a better program to improve the open area, and consider increasing the solar performance of the open spaces. As well, the courtyard should be opened up more. Reducing the pedestrian link would help to add to the courtyard's width.

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

2. Address:	3530 Sawmill Crescent (formerly 3599 E Kent Avenue North)
Permit No.	DP-2016-00265
Description:	To construct a 25-storey residential building (314 dwelling units) with a seven-storey podium over two levels of underground parking.
Zoning:	CD-1 (566)
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	First
Architect:	Francl Architecture (Walter Francl)
Owner:	Wesgroup
Delegation:	Walter Francl, Francl Architecture Mahbod Biazi, Francl Architecture Daryl Tyacke, ETA Beau Jarvis, Wesgroup Brad Jones, Wesgroup
Staff:	Nicholas Standeven

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (8-0)

- **Introduction:** Nicholas Standeven, Development Planner, introduced 3530 Sawmill Crescent, formerly EFL Parcel 18.2, as a complete development application. The proposed development consists of a multiple dwelling containing 314 dwelling units with two and a half levels of underground parking having vehicular access from a shared lane mews.

Parcel 18.2 is part of the East Fraser Lands (EFL) which is located south of Marine way between Kerr Street and Boundary Road. This is a large development area, with over 130 acres of land and 1.6 km of riverfront associated with the development. The site area is 7,105 m² (76,477 sf). While the topography is relatively flat it does slope approximately 5' from the high point at the north to the low point on the south.

The site is irregularly shaped and is bounded by Sawmill Crescent to the north, and the Kent Avenue Greenway, the CP Rail Right of Way and Kent Avenue to the south. To the east is Parcel 20-21 which was recently seen at the UDP, and to the west is Parcel 18.1 which is currently under construction.

Vehicle access is from the shared lane mews to the west between Parcel 18.1 and 18.2. Staff support the proposed level of parking at base surface due to the geotechnical constraints of the site. The remainder of the parking is located below base surface.

The site is currently zoned CD-1 (566). The EFL Phase I design guidelines suggest a mid-block courtyard, a 4-5 storey podium streetwall along Sawmill Crescent, and a 'High exposure' tower with a maximum height of 25 storeys.

The proposed development consists of 314 dwelling units in total, with 57% of the units to be 2BR or larger. Three storey townhouses arranged in a bar to the south of the site and 17 Live-work loft-style dwelling units on the bottom two floors of the podium. There is a proposed FSR of 4.07 (311,460 sq ft.) which is in accordance with the guidelines recommended density of 311,454 square feet.

The podium's juncture is marked with a single loaded corridor which helps bring natural light into the relatively long corridor. The tower overbuild is setback slightly from Sawmill Crescent at the northwest, and crowned with a reduced upper level penthouse. The tower overhangs the courtyard and the mass is articulated with balconies with vertical aluminum sun and privacy screens to the east and west.

There is an indoor exercise room and co-related outdoor amenity space on Level 1 that connects to the courtyard, and a Level 2 indoor amenity space at podium juncture also facing out towards the courtyard. An additional indoor amenity space is located on Level 7 on the podium roof, along with areas for urban agriculture and other outdoor amenities. Extensive and intensive vegetated roofs are located throughout the project and landscape terraces define the public realm interface on all sides

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

1. The treatment of the western edge along the lane mews.

- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting that they have increased the pedestrian permeability of the site. It is now possible to walk from the corner of the intersection up through the site, which allows for more landscaping and broad seating areas.

The original intentions for the site have been respected. Mechanical elements have been concealed, and virtually every surface on the site has been landscaped. A great deal of planting and gardening is available on the roof decks.

There are projecting elements which act both as screens for the balconies and sun shields for the building. Materials include darker brick on the bottom with lighter brick on top; the townhouses are all done in darker brick. The use of brick allows for an enhanced building envelope with a lot of durability.

At the SW corner there is a children's play area with a big slide. At the upper level of the podium there are community gardens and a hot tub area to create a space to socialize and build community. The townhouses and live/work spaces also have terraces which step down onto the public pathways to connect them into the public realm.

Significant soil volumes are being proposed to retain as much water as possible and the area off the commons is geared towards attracting birds with nesting houses dotted around the podium. The plaza has a nice urban feeling, with trees off-slab and seating elements added liberally. A public bike-share program exists in a covered area.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - Adding another entry near the NE elevator core would be beneficial;
 - Improve livability on the A-12 bedroom unit by increasing access to light;
 - Larger balconies on the south façade of the tower;
 - The play structures could be further developed;
 - Make sure sufficient water gets to the bioswale.
- **Related Commentary:** The panel started by noting that this is a unique project but still fits in well with other buildings in this area. Overall this is a handsome project, and a good job has been done with integrating the spaces.

Celebrate the elevator lobby at the northeast corner as a secondary entrance; currently this is too big a project to only have one entrance. There is one A-12 unit in the northwest corner which needs to have a look taken at its windows as it may currently be too dark and unlivable. One panel member thought that the balconies at the tower, particularly on the southern exposure, could be strengthened.

The landscaping is very successful and complete, but more greenery could be added to the western edge. The panel was split on whether more landscaping could be added to the lane mews as some panel members like the unapologetically utilitarian feel of it. While others thought that the lane mews needs a bit of attention to detail and landscape to bring it alive.

The applicant should ensure that enough water gets into the bioswale since it may be a lot drier than anticipated. One panel member noted that every face has a different response to solar exposure and that is fine.

The overhang for the bike-share is a clever move, but the overhang could be raised to better express the floating of the mass above.

The play area needs more development as there is an opportunity to move beyond the usual. Additional play equipment could help with this.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the panel. The comments are well taken and they will be responded to appropriately.

3. Address:	1255 W Pender Street (formerly 1250 W Hastings)
Permit No.	DE420258
Description:	To develop a 19-storey mixed-use building with commercial at grade and residential above (20 dwelling units) over three levels of underground parking accessed from W Hastings Street.
Zoning:	DD
Application Status:	Complete Development Application
Review:	First
Architect:	Francl Architecture (Stefan Aepli) Shigeru Ban Architects (Dean Maltz)
Owner:	Portliving
Delegation:	Dean Maltz, Shigeru Ban Architects Stefan Aepli, Francl Architecture Cornelia Oberlander Tobi Reyes, Portliving Zachary Moreland, Shigeru Ban Architects
Staff:	Sailen Black

EVALUATION: SUPPORT (7-0)

- **Introduction:** Sailen Black, Development Planner, introduced the site located south of Coal Harbour Marina, a half-block east of the Coal Harbour Community Centre and Park. The site is on Pender Street on the south side and is a busy arterial condition. However, it also double fronts onto Hastings Street which is quieter and more pedestrian-oriented.

To the west at 1285 West Pender Street there is the Evergreen, a 10-storey mixed-use building which has a Heritage "A" listing and is protected through a Heritage Revitalization Agreement. To the east at 1228 W Hastings is a 25-storey apartment building (the Palladio) and immediately north across Hastings Street there is a residential tower (C-side). There are also several new and existing towers on the south side of Pender Street.

The proposal is for a 19-storey mixed-use building with commercial at grade and residential above including 20 dwelling units, with underground parking accessed from W Hastings Street. The building height is 224 ft. above the base surface on Pender Street, and the tower element is set back 40 ft. from the residential neighbour. Proposed FSR is 6.6 (54,503 sq. ft.). The building is generally very similar in form to the adjacent Evergreen building up to level 13, where the structure transitions to timber columns.

The planner reviewed sections of the local policies, including the design objectives in the Downtown Design Guidelines.

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

1. On the relationship of the proposed design (including consideration of form, setbacks, edge conditions, expression, and detailing) to its two immediate neighbours.
 2. On the creation of an appealing and attractive public realm interface to the two public streets.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team introduced the project by noting that they have tried to keep things as simple and restrained as possible.

There are four contextual conditions which were considered for this building: the relationship to the Evergreen Building; the relationship to Coal Harbour; the relationship to local high rises; and the relation to surrounding mountains.

Sympathetic relationships have been created between this and the Evergreen Building, with transitional massing between the lower massing of the evergreen building and the buildings to the east. The triangle at the top gives a clear orientation towards the waterfront, and gives the building the look of a lantern on a lighthouse. The triangular shape also limits shadows impacts on the neighbouring park. A portion of the core of the building is on the east façade, which eliminates $\frac{1}{4}$ of the façade area and reduces the amount of vision area between this and the adjacent building.

The building is an expressed concrete structure on the lower 12 floors, with a mass timber structure on the upper 7 floors, which is the project's commitment to sustainable design. The terraces are located on the lower stepped east side of the building and wrap around to the north side on the vertical face only. Overall the materiality of evergreen is strong and simple, and that has been extended into this building.

The terraces are heavily landscaped. The vines on the building are similar to ivy and echo the lines on the evergreen building.

The winds from the Burrard inlet are much stronger due to climate change, so shelters have been added to allow people to enjoy the outdoor spaces. Terraced roof decks are being used to break up the wind and maximize light penetration using a simple plane. There is some stepping, but there is a large special separation between the stairs.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**
 - None
- **Related Commentary:** The panel mentioned that the dialogue is contrasting but complimentary to the Evergreen Building, and that the wood makes sense.

The Panel discussed the angled form at the retail lobby at Pender Street as it pulls back to mimic the Evergreen Building. One member thought that may not be the right move, while most felt that the mirroring is a nice addition.

All the right moves have been taken in respecting the urban context. There is great legibility, an intelligent and creative response to a restricted site, and a clear expression and logical use of materials.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team thanked the Panel.

4. Address:	33 W Cordova Street (36 Blood Alley)
Permit No.	N/A
Description:	Workshop to discuss a new mixed-use building on Blood Alley. This is a joint workshop with the Gastown Historic Area Planning Committee and the Vancouver Heritage Commission.
Zoning:	HA-2
Application Status:	Workshop
Review:	First
Architect:	Henriquez Partners Architects (Gregory Henriquez)
Owner:	Westbank BC Housing
Delegation:	Gregory Henriquez, Henriquez Partners Architects Rui Nunes, Henriquez Partners Architects Raymond Kwong, BC Housing Pamon Chang, Westbank
Staff:	Paul Cheng

EVALUATION: NON-VOTING WORKSHOP

- **Introduction:** Paul Cheng, Development Planner, started by noting that this workshop was convened in order to discuss concerns, gather ideas and problem-solve. Since it garnered non-support from previous reviews with the Gastown Heritage Area Planning Commission (GHAPC) and the Vancouver Heritage Commission (VHC), the applicant requested that a non-voting joint session with the UDP be held so that further explorations could help address concerns heard from the GHAPC and the VHC.

The site exists on the 0 block of W Cordova Street, which is one of the most character-defining blocks of historical Gastown. It is dimensioned approximately 207' x 92' and considered to be an anomalous site.

The rear 40 ft. of the block depth is Blood Alley Square, which is owned by the City of Vancouver and operated as a neighbourhood public park. Blood Alley Square is currently undergoing a concurrent process for a new design being led by CoV staff. The design will also be reviewed by the UDP at a later date since it is still to be determined by staff and consultants through a separate public and advisory committee review process.

There are two historical buildings on this site: The two-storey New Fountain Hotel built in 1899 and the three-storey Stanley Hotel built in 1906. Both buildings originally functioned as short-term hotel rooms with shared bathrooms.

The site is currently zoned HA-2, one of Vancouver's three Heritage zones. This zone is historically highly mixed-use, commercial retail frontages, warehouse frontages, hostels, hotels, and is the original Granville Townsite from which the City of Vancouver developed and grew. The neighbourhood is a nationally-designated historic district. The zoning's intent is to recognize the area's special status and to ensure the maintenance of Gastown's "Turn of the Century" historical and architectural character.

The HA-2 Design Guidelines were passed by Council in 2002 and were written in conjunction with the Heritage Density Transfer Program. The intent of these was to encourage sites encumbered with historical buildings to retain the building, and any "unused" density could be banked and sold to other development sites in the downtown peninsula as bonus density.

The following statements in the guidelines support this objective:

“The objective that underlies this document is that appropriate design guidelines will encourage the conservation of the authentic heritage character and fabric of Gastown, and will also ensure that new development is compatible with and will contribute to that character.”

“The objective is to reinforce the original scale of Gastown and the character-defining sawtooth profile”

“The permitted height for a heritage building is its existing height.”

Council has since frozen the Heritage Density Transfer Program, due to the lack of available receiving development sites. This leaves short historical buildings, such as the one at 33 W Cordova, economically disadvantaged compared to neighbouring taller buildings, if no more than one inconspicuous storey is permitted to be developed.

The main policy objectives this proposal come under is the through the Downtown Eastside (DTES) plan. The primary focus of this application is the replacement and upgrade of 80 existing single-room occupancies (SROs) into 80 self-contained dwelling units equipped with bathrooms and kitchens. The existing building interiors are considered to be at the end of their life-cycle.

The extra height on this site is being considered because the applicant proposes that it is required to make the project economically viable. As such, Staff have required a pro-forma to be submitted for staff analysis, which is currently under review.

This particular maximum height and massing, with a taller portion to the east, was directed by planning in order to preserve areas of direct sunlight onto the park during the afternoon and late-afternoon hours, especially during the spring and summer months. Planning staff acknowledge that the proposed building creates an increased shadow impact on Blood Alley, and recognize that the site has enjoyed an exceptional solar exposure with the properties due to the southern structure being only two and three storeys tall.

The proposed maximum building height of 110' ft. is expressed along just more than half of the width of the site. It has been accepted by Planning as something that could come in as an application, and be subject to further consultation with the community, the public and the applicable advisory bodies.

The application has to date held a public open house event, and reviews with the GHAPC and the VHC. Comments heard from these two advisory bodies include the following:

- Concerns about its scale in comparison with the historic buildings of Gastown. A more sensitive built form is sought.
 - Proposed demolition of two designated heritage buildings, partial retention of only the facades, and a lack of integration with the new structure.
 - Concern for the proposed 600-seat performance venue, its impact on the surrounding neighbourhood and Blood Alley square.
- **Applicant's Introductory Comments:** The applicant team started by noting that this is an unusual project but an attempt was made to preserve the site. BC Housing was brought in in order to make the economics work with more SRO replacements and less market residential. This project adds a lot to the area, but a project like this is extremely tenuous due to the financial viability.

There are concerns over the precedent of this height in Gastown, although the maximum heights vary from site to site in this area. An attempt was made to ensure solar penetration into Blood Alley using nooks and crannies in the building to allow for light to enter.

The façade matches with the unit plans behind it, but the larger social housing units being requested have made the proforma less economically viable. What has been created is a collage of little ‘buildings’ at the top which are independent from the rest of the building below.

Previous concerns have been expressed about the authenticity of the relationship between the new and the old, and the integration of the top with the bottom sections. The new proposal integrates the façade better and uses articulation to denote more respect while retaining density. The essential idea is to maintain the program while still being authentic in respecting the expression of the old building.

The initial scheme allows the most light into Blood Alley. In the revised scheme mass has been pushed away to allow light in by dividing the building into three equal pieces.

The applicant team then took questions from the panel.

- **Panel’s Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:**

- N/A

- **Related Commentary:** The panel noted that the punched window and sawtooth character were better for the building. They were also generally in support of a taller, slimmer form in order to maximize light penetration into Blood Alley and into the SRO spaces to increase livability. It is important that the heritage façade be dominant on both sides of the building, which may mean compromising on some of the site planning parameters.

Design development is needed on Blood Alley both respect to traffic flow and the look of the area. The form needs to fit the neighbourhood, and the materials need to be retained and re-integrated as much as possible. Something also needs to be done in order to activate the alley with more opportunities.

The panel and guests were split on the heritage retention of the site. Some thought that growth outside the historic guidelines compromises the character of Gastown; so the proposed demands of the site are in conflict with the heritage necessary to the site. Others thought that the increased massing made sense and that the revised scheme would fit the gritty feel of Gastown with some architectural modifications to express the particular response to the policy story.

Some of the guests thought that the proposed massing feels overwhelming and drowns out the sense of history. The building should be preserved with the approach that the heritage building be the dominant component of the overall built form. More attention is needed at the ground level. There is a need to respect what was there previously, and compromises should be made in order to take a more logical approach to this site.

One panel member noted that there is no need for additional seating where alcohol is served in Gastown, and that there is a lack of secured parking for the building. Another mentioned that the building has accessibility issues for people with disabilities and seniors. A few panel members suggested re-opening the density bank in order to allow the transfer of some of the required density off-site.

Several members thought that the existing rear façade should be retained and given historical significance. They also thought that the front façade should be completely restored.

- **Applicant's Response:** The applicant team declined to give a response.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.