

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: Wednesday, March 25, 2026

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Microsoft Teams Meeting

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Bob Lilly
Scott Mitchell
Mariyeh Sharifisaraei
Jon Stovell
Aya Abdelfatah (Chair)
Maryam Tashakor
Aaron Petruic

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

- 1. 855 W 12th Ave (VGH Campus Master Plan, Non-Voting)**
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1. Address: 855 W 12th Avenue (VGH Campus Master Plan, Non-voting Session)
Permit No.: RZ-2024-00043
Description: The City of Vancouver has received an application from Kasian Architecture Interior Design and Planning Ltd. on behalf of Vancouver Coastal Health Authority to rezone the Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) campus site to allow for the long-term redevelopment of the VGH campus site over the next 30+ years. Ten phases with over 300,000 sq. m of modernized healthcare facilities in buildings up to 24 storeys are proposed. See Proposal Summary below for more information. City staff are seeking input on the overall approaches to redevelopment at VGH to inform three related planning processes for VGH: 1) VGH Campus Rezoning: A campus-wide rezoning application proposes a new site specific CD-1 zoning by-law to support the long-term redevelopment and modernization of the VGH campus. The rezoning application proposes updates to development parameters including but not limited to height, density, use, setbacks, site-wide transportation networks, heritage and open space requirements for the entire VGH campus. The campus rezoning is targeting consideration by Council following steps 2 and 3 below. 2) Interim Zoning Amendment: As the overall VGH campus rezoning progresses, a minor 'interim amendment' is proposed to site coverage and density in the existing CD-1 (59) (Comprehensive Development) District By-law to permit development of a new 11-storey hospital building with Emergency and Inpatient Care facilities. The interim zoning amendment is targeting consideration by Council during summer 2026. 3) VGH Campus Policy Update: Concurrently with the interim zoning amendment, the City of Vancouver is preparing to update site-specific policies in the Broadway Plan to guide the overall VGH campus rezoning process. The policy update is also targeting consideration by Council during summer 2026.

Application Status: Rezoning Application
Architect: Kasian Architecture Interior Design and Planning
Delegation: Shelly Fleck, VGH, Vancouver Coastal Health
Abhishek Gupta, Project Lead, Kasian Architecture
Stephen Vincent, Landscape Architecture, Durante Kreuk Ltd.
Staff: Hiroko Kobayashi, Mehdi Einifar, Allison Smith, Kent MacDougall

EVALUATION: Non-Voting

Planner's Introduction:

Allison Smith, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project with a brief description of the existing site context, followed by an overview of the anticipated context as per the Broadway Plan. Allison concluded the presentation with an overview of the related planning processes, a description of the site and a summary of the overall VGH campus rezoning proposal.

Mehdi Einifar, Development Planner, gave an overview of the neighbourhood context in relation to the proposal, followed by the expectations of the built-form guidelines related to this project and its context. Mehdi then provided 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. Built Form and Site Design

Any design strategies that could be considered to refine the proposed built form:

- Through massing, siting, and setbacks to reduce perceived scale, improve sunlight access and views, respond to surrounding context, and strengthen the public realm and open space network for this large, unique, provincially significant medical campus.

2. Public Realm and Open Space Experience

What design strategies could enhance the public realm and open space experience:

- Improving the pedestrian interface of wide podiums and building setbacks along key corridors (W 10th Avenue, W 12th Avenue, Heather Street and the proposed “Willow Green Corridor”);
- Integrating a cohesive “Wellness Walk”;
- Incorporating meaningful public art and reconciliation opportunities; and
- Maintaining the quality and continuity of public open space throughout phased development.

3. What additional urban design consideration should be included in the guidelines to further strengthen overall site performance and long-term quality?

Applicant’s Introductory Comments:

Applicant Abhishek Gupta, Project Lead, for Kaisan Architecture, noted the objectives and gave a general overview of the project followed by Stephen Vincent Landscape Architect presenting on the landscape design and the project’s sustainability strategies.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

Panel’s Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **Mr. Bob Lilly**, seconded by **Mr. Jon Stovell** and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel to recommend the following consensus items for review and consideration:

1. The open space requirements should not be physically required from a health care facility, recommend focus be on health care functions and systems;
2. Recommend the guidelines to be clearer with the public realm;
3. Further review of the setbacks and accessibility to provide more pockets of greenery;
4. Recommend the priorities of healthcare take precedence over the heritage designations;
5. Built form guidelines should avoid any language on prescribing specific land uses on the ground floor, including requiring retail;
6. Recommend guidelines that look at wayfinding, weather protection and nighttime design;

7. Recommend looking at the impacts of future shadowing from the proposed buildings.

Summary of Panel Commentary:

Generally, there was support for increase in height and density.

Explore improvements to the massing as it feels massive and monolithic along key edges and transition points, in particular along W 10th Avenue, W 12th Avenue and the proposed “Willow Corridor”.

Consider refinement to the form and height along important edges, as well as podium experience and tower placement.

Consider simple buildings and detailing.

Consider the proposed setbacks, and integration of greenery along site borders.

Consider flexibility with the built form design to accommodate healthcare uses and consider elements such as wayfinding and accessibility.

The priorities of healthcare should take precedence, and medical spaces should be at the forefront of design considerations. Caution from having restrictive guidelines as we need built form to evolve with medical technology.

Consider proposed buildings to have some articulation on the massing, particularly at grade; however, avoid massing restrictions that preclude healthcare functions. Articulations should be considered to improve access to sunlight and improve visual interest.

Consider the shadow impacts of the bed-towers such as on the proposed “Willow Corridor”.

The public realm lacks clarity and feels fragmented. Public space should be integrated, smaller, and linked throughout campus. Consider additional work on ‘looped connectivity’ of the space and further exploration of integrated campus approach to site design (i.e. use of pathways, courtyards, etc.)

General support for “wellness walk” concept, but should be continuous and connected.

Suggestion to include guidelines to address proposed ‘interim open space strategy’.

Explore the construction lay down areas and how they will be accommodated during construction.

The details of the material aspects of the buildings are missing, hard to review.

Consider more access to sunlight and greenery, studies have proven this can help with healing.

To the City Planners, the setbacks are very important, therefore pinching and not allowing space for more landscape is a lost opportunity.

Consider green rooftops that patients can access and provide a healing space.

Various panelists noted that due to tight budgets, it should not be the responsibility of healthcare to provide neighborhood parks. This should be the role of the City. Rather, there should be various

pockets of greenery and circular pathways provided for the ease and wellbeing of patients.

The above grade parking structure on 12th Avenue across the street is generally unattractive. While need for parking understood, accommodating parking underground should be pursued where possible.

Consider weather protection and nighttime design as the site will be used 24 hours.

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