

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: Wednesday, March 11, 2026

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Joe Wai Room, Vancouver City Hall

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Aidan Shirely
Ana Maria Llanos
Bob Lily
Maryam Tashakor
Peeraj Thakre
Tony Osborn (Chair)

RECORDING SECRETARY: M. Sem

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING

1. **2396-2400 Kingsway and 2441-2493 E 33rd Ave**
2. **601 W Cordova St - formerly 555 W Cordova St**

Chair Tony Osborn called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. The panel then considered applications as scheduled for presentation.

- 1. Address:** **2396-2400 Kingsway and 2441-2493 E 33rd Ave**
- Description:** To rezone 2396-2400 Kingsway & 2441-2493 E 33rd Avenue from C-2 (Commercial) District, RT-2 (Residential) District and R1-1 (Residential Inclusive) District, to CD-1 (Comprehensive Development) District to allow the development of a mixed-use development with four residential towers (18-, 25-, 26- and 28-storeys). This proposal includes: a total floor space ratio (FSR) of 5.04; a floor area of 61,302 sq. m (659,849 sq. ft.), which includes: commercial uses on the ground level: 15,000 sq. ft. of indoor community gathering space; a 37-space childcare facility; and 863 rental residential units; 20,000 sq. ft. public plaza. This site is within the Rental Housing on City-Owned Land – Public Benefits Pilot Rezoning Policy and Norquay Village Plan. The application requests consideration of height and density in excess of the existing policy.
- Zoning:** RS-1, RT-2 & C-2 to CD-1
- Application Status:** Rezoning Application
- Review:** First
- Architect:** Acton Ostry Architects
- Delegates:** Mark Ostry, Architect, Acton Ostry Architects Inc
Johannes Petzel, Landscape Architect,
Kevin Welsh, Sustainability Advisor,
- Staff:** Nicholas Danford, Rezoning Planner
Grace Jiang, Development Planner

EVALUATION: Support with recommendations (6/0)

Planner's Introduction:

Nicholas Danford, Rezoning Planner, introduced the project with a description of the existing site context, followed by an overview of the existing policy framework as well as the anticipated policy context being considered under the Rental Housing on City-Owned Land – Public Benefits Pilot Rezoning Policy and Norquay Village Plan. Nicholas concluded with a description of the site and a summary of the rezoning proposal.

Grace Jiang, Development Planner then gave an overview of the neighbourhood context in relation to the proposal, followed by the expectations of the built form and public realm guidelines for this project, including site-specific urban design objectives

and principles. Grace then gave a description of the proposed project before concluding with Staff questions for the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Mark Ostry, Architect, Acton Ostry Architects Inc., noted the objectives and gave a general overview of the project., Kevin Welsh, Sustainability Advisor, Introba, gave an overview of the sustainability strategy. Johannes Petzel, Landscape Architect, PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

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

Consider the policy context and the site-specific urban design objectives and principles, please comment on:

- The height, form, and massing, including how the development may function as a neighbourhood landmark while respecting the local context.
- The site design and public realm strategy, including:
 - The arrangement of the plaza and park-like open space.
 - The strength of the north-south connection; and
 - The quality of the interfaces at the plaza entrance, the pedestrian realm along Kingsway, and the east pathway.
- The architectural expression, providing guidance for future design development, with the aim of contributing to the skyline and urban views, while mitigating perceived massing.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **Aidan Shirely** and seconded by **Maryam Tashakor** 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:

- Consider further development of the plaza and park space to provide greater activation.
 - Differentiation in tower heights to improve the development's function as a landmark.
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- Study opportunities to refine the floor plate geometry to enhance privacy, livability and solar performance.
- Refinement of podium expression to encourage more articulation and variability in response to context.
- Development of the connection to the plaza and adjacent park space.
- Development of the landscape design to include more playground space and careful consideration to the rain-water collection landscape feature.
- Refinement of the tower expression to study intermittent datums.

Panel Commentary

A panelist encouraged further developing the open spaces to activate the entire site and invite people onto the site to make the development a landmark.

Panelists encouraged more playground spaces as a great destination for public to bring families together in conjunction with the neighbourhood house.

Panelists felt the pavilion and stage may cut off the plaza and green space and encouraged better transition from the urban plaza to the park. A panelist suggested reducing the pavilion from two to one to increase the play space for children, and a panelist encouraged reconsidering the need and function of the covered open spaces.

Panelists encouraged the Panelists encouraged Landscape Architect to question the allocation to the wetland in this urban context and its functionality and seasonality or consider other solutions.

A panelist noted the opportunity to integrate E 33rd Ave public realm into the overall design of the public open space to create a better green edge.

Panelists encourage further design development to the urban agriculture, integrating as a landscape feature with the amenity spaces.

Panelists recommended more differences in tower heights to create a more crafted skyline.

A panelist suggested the heights decreased towards the residential towers to the south.

Panelists recommended further refinement of the tower angles, considering slimming down the towers and creating opportunities for privacy and solar shading.

Panelists noted the horizontal banding would not work to relate to the datum in this area and make the towers look less slender. The tower form and expression need some clarity.

Some panelists felt the podium is too high and could be two to three storeys and does not have to be the same height along Kingsway; one panelist felt podium height is appropriate.

Panelists noted the podium is a bit relentless and encouraged considering whether it needs to be interrupted. It's also noted that the overhangs do not feel tall enough for the depth and do not draw people into that space on the ground. A panelist encouraged opportunity to use more curve edges to soften the plaza.

A panelist encouraged consideration of the relationship of the building expression between the podium and tower.

A panelist noted that the connections through site do not feel intuitive to the public and do not feel like going anywhere or connecting to the park or the neighbourhood.

A Panelist noted the plaza would be better for commercial uses that spill out rather than residential lobby uses. It feels like a passageway more than a gathering place.

A panelist encouraged the landscape team to think about how to give this plaza definition around what is specific to this site, rather than generic design. They also suggested improvements to the plaza interface, particularly considering whether childcare is the best termination for the plaza.

A panelist concerned about the commercial relationship to the south facing café patio, if that commercial space becomes a large retailer, such as Shopper's. It is suggested to study the floor plan of that podium to break up the monotony of that Kingsway facing podium elevation to give it a bit more generosity there and that would also allow a bit more sunlight to get down the sidewalk.

A panelist concerned about the residential lobby on the east side.

Some panelists recommended UDP review at future design phases along with a physical model.

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

- 2. Address:** **601 W Cordova St - formerly 555 W Cordova St**
- Description:** Preliminary development application for alterations to the staging and storage area located in the below grades structure of the existing heritage building, and to develop a 22-storey building, consisting of: retail use at grade and General Office use from levels 2 to 22; a proposed FSR of 7.05; a combined total proposed Floor Area of 580,617 sq.ft. (53,941 m²), including newly proposed Floor Area of 417,016 sq.ft. (38,742 m²); a proposed Height of 416 ft. (127 m), a public plaza.
- Zoning:** DD
- Application Status:** Complete Development Application
- Review:** First
- Architect:** James KM Cheng Architects
- Delegates:** James Cheng, Design Architect
Ginger Gosnell-Myers, Indigenous Planner
Donald Luxton, Heritage Consultant
Chris Phillips, Landscape Architect
- Staff:** Sailen Black, Development Planner

EVALUATION: Support with recommendation (5/1)

Planner's Introduction:

Sailen Black, Development Planner gave an overview of the neighbourhood context in relation to the proposal, followed by the expectations of the zoning and guidelines for this project. Sailen then gave a description of the proposed project before concluding with Staff questions for the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Ginger Gosnell-Myers, James Cheng, and Don Luxton gave a general introduction to the project. Chris Phillips presented on the landscape strategy.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

Advice from the Panel is sought on this preliminary development application in general, and in particular on the following items:

1. Response to the criteria for additional height in the Downtown ODP
 2. Compatibility with the intents of the Central Waterfront Hub Framework and the Downtown Design Guidelines
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3. Relationship of the overall form to the existing context, including the proposed interface with the Station building

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, it was moved by **Maryam Tashakor** and seconded by **Aidan Shirley** 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:

- Study raising the first occupied floors to increase the separation between the tower and the Station building.
- Study making the form feel less bulky by better integrating the “tree” metaphor and making the masses more slender.
- Study programming at the ground plane to ensure the interim plaza functions well, lobby space is activated and the connection to the Station building is strong.

Panel Commentary:

Panelists noted consideration to elevating the bottom of the mass from the waterfront station.

A Panelist did not see the benefits in the narrow slot in the core and encouraged having one structure.

Biophilic design is a strong element and would like to see that carried forward.

A Panelist noted concerns with too much concrete exposure.

A Panelist noted the vertical spacing between the top of the station building and the under-side of the first storey of office space feels too close, and suggesting looking at ways it can be raised.

Some Panelists noted the bulkiness does not look like a tree; it should be less abstract and have some softer transitions in the stepping.

A Panelist suggested a more playful resolution to the ground plane, currently it looks a bit stark.

A Panelist noted the only thing interesting about the building is the bulk, everything else about it is quite a generic office building that cantilevers in a few directions.

Panelists noted the building looks very bulky and top heavy and should be more slender.

A Panelist recommends altering the view cone in this area in order to allow for a more slender form.

Panelists suggested more height would be supportable.

Panelists noted the form appears to be the result of site constraints and viability.

A Panelist noted the way that the boxes are cantilevered adjacent to each other, will be tricky to convert it into residential in the future or for any other use. Panelist wishes the city has some policy in place to require building types like this to be designed to enable future flexibility.

Staff's Response: The staff team thanked the panel for their comments.
