

URBAN DESIGN PANEL MINUTES

DATE: Wednesday, June 18, 2025

TIME: 3:00 pm

PLACE: Joe Wai Meeting Room (110), Main Floor - City Hall, 453 W 12 Ave

PRESENT: MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DESIGN PANEL:

Tony Osborn (Chair)
Allyse Li
Aaron Petruic
Maryam Tashakor
Khushali Kagrana
Alan Storey

REGRETS:

RECORDING SECRETARY: M. Sem

ITEMS REVIEWED AT THIS MEETING
1. 800-876 Granville St

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

- 1. Address:** 800-876 Granville St
- Description:** To rezone 800-876 Granville Street to allow the development of a 43-storey (north) and 39-storey (south) mixed-use building. This proposal includes: A building height of 137.5 m (451 ft.) (north tower) and 120.4 m (395 ft.) (south tower); A total floor space ratio (FSR) of 14.5; A floor area of 64,641 sq. m (695,789 sq. ft.) which includes: Retention of the Commodore Ballroom and Lanes; Façade retention of the four heritage buildings; Commercial uses on levels one to five; Hotel use on levels six to eight in the north building; Approximately 15,000 sq. ft. floor area for below-market rental units; and 523 market rental residential units contained within both towers. The site is located in sub-area 'K1' of the Downtown Official Development Plan (DODP). The application requests consideration of height and density in excess of the existing policy, which is being reviewed concurrently with the Granville Street Planning Program ([External link](#)). Sub-area 'K1' allows a maximum height of 27.4 m (90 ft.) and a maximum density of 3.5 FSR. Amendments to the Downtown Official Development Plan would also be required to enable this project. The site includes a number of heritage properties, which are subject to the Heritage Policies. The application proposes primarily façade-only retention for four heritage properties on site, along with the complete retention of the Commodore Ballroom. The site includes the State Hotel at 872-876 Granville Street, which is a registered Single Room Accommodation (SRA) building containing approximately 73 vacant units. The building is subject to the City's Single Room Accommodation By-law.
- Zoning:** DD to CD-1
- Application Status:** Rezoning Application
- Review:** Second
- Architect:** Perkins & Will
- Delegates:** Aik Ablimit, Perkins & Will
Ryan Braggs, Perkins & Will
- Staff:** Nicholas Danford, Rezoning Planner
Hamid Shayan, Development Planner
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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 Downtown Official Development Plan. Nick concluded with a description of the site and a summary of the rezoning proposal.

Hamid Shayan, 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. Hamid then gave a description of the proposed project before concluding with Staff questions for the Panel.

Applicant's Introductory Comments:

Applicant Aik Ablimit, Architect of Perkins & Will and Ryan Braggs, noted the objectives and gave a general overview of the project.

Applicant and staff took questions from Panel.

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

The proposed overall form, scale and massing articulation with particular consideration to the following:

- The overall compatibility of the new addition to the heritage buildings
- The contribution to the future urban context envisioned by the key principals of the new Granville Street Plan.

The interface with the public realm along all streets and the laneway and how the proposal contributes to the public life in Granville St. as an entertainment district in the city.

The preliminary material palettes, architectural expression, and details to assist staff review of the future application.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement:

Having reviewed the project, and was the decision of the Urban Design Panel:

THAT the Panel Recommend Support with the following recommendations:

1. Further consideration to improve the laneway in particular with pedestrians coming and going on the laneway.
2. Further consideration on the design and the orientation of the shared balconies to better access to the light to improve the functionality and sociality of the residents.
3. Further consideration to improve the functionality of the bike storage.
4. Further consideration should be given particularly to Robson and Granville frontages.
5. Further consideration to the design expression and the articulation of the south tower.

Summary of Panel Commentary:

Panel in general supports the form, character and massing of the development; as well as the material articulation and its relationship to the heritage facades on the three sides of the property.

Panelist noted there could be more street level views of the massing, particularly looking down Granville St with a slight elevation.

Regarding the blank façade of the south tower, Panel noted the overall material expression is quite refined and quiet, which seems appropriate. Panel suggested the applicant develop the material expression of this façade to blend well with all other faces of the development so that it doesn't stand apart from the facades that aren't as constrained by their adjacencies to a property line.

A Panelist noted the contemporary façade on Granville street in isolation can be as special as the Dal Grauer Substation which is an important heritage piece of Vancouver and a real contribution.

Panelists noted the heritage response has improved from previous application.

Panelist noted further consideration to the different speeds and roles of mobility happening all at the same corner.

A Panelist suggested the sidewalk to be more generous on Granville (i.e. In Portland, on Burnside Street they have created an arcade that allows the sidewalk to be more generous.

Panelists noted further articulation of the bike parking is needed.

Panelist noted concerns with maintenance, natural lighting and 'cave like feel' to the shared balconies.

A panelist noted in terms of the set building the shared balcony expression is quite unique and suggested relocating them to face a private courtyard and not facing Granville Street.

A panelist noted on the topmost balcony, at the edge of the shared balcony, the depth of the planters is blocking all light from the uppermost balcony of those shared balconies; for it to be successful it requires design articulation and direction of sunlight.

A panelist noted the balcony at the corners is interesting, but it looks like office buildings, there is an opportunity to express residential identity through using balconies whether it be a shared balcony or the balconies running through the 2-3 bedrooms.

One panelist noted, the idea of the grid falls apart there, the heritage below is not defined by that grid.

Some panelists noted improving the outdoor amenity space for people with families.

A Panelist noted it is important to differentiate the corner of Robson and Granville and try to relate it to the heritage façade.

Some panelists noted further design development of the type of glazing system, it will have a different look if this goes to window wall and be thoughtful about the resolution of some of those details while keeping it economical for heritage revitalization project that is offering rental.

A panelist noted the loading relaxation is supportable.

Panelists noted further consideration to design and articulation to the laneway in particular to safety and pedestrian use.

Design development to the Smithe street elevation.

Further development consideration of the balcony typologies and orientations, particularly on the south tower.

Design development of the podium expression in relation to the heritage assets focusing on Granville and Robson corner.

A panelist noted the public art in the back alley would be an interesting solution.

There were concerns with the bike parking accessibility from lane only to elevator. A panelist noted concerns with many bicycles accessed by only two elevators and noting challenges for the residents using them; having it above grade and only having that visual connection is not engaging with the way people use bicycles.

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