



## Heritage Vancouver

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Sept 28, 2020

City of Vancouver  
Kaveh Imani, Project Facilitator  
453 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Re: 555 West Cordova Street - DP-2019-01035

Dear Kaveh Imani,

Cadillac Fairview Corp. Ltd. has submitted a revised development application for the parking area immediately east of Waterfront Station (555 West Cordova Street). Heritage Vancouver Society (HVS) is writing to express opposition to the latest version of this proposal.

### Site

The project site is located at the edge of the Downtown and Gastown districts, between Waterfront Station and the Landing. It is zoned within the Downtown District, and part of the Central Waterfront Hub Framework (2009) area. HVS questions the extent to which the proposed tower integrates with the site's historic setting. It seems to simply be a new development occupying a vacant site, rather than a development that contributes to the heritage value of the area.

HVS believes that there are great opportunities to enhance the public connection to the area where the proposed tower is located. It could provide the public with excellent opportunities to learn about First Nations stories of place; Gastown; the transnational movement of people through rail transport; and the surrounding buildings such as Waterfront Station (1914), and the Landing (1905/1913).

Further, the site currently offers magnificent views of the mountains north to Vancouver at grade level, both from between Waterfront Station and the Landing, as well as north of the two buildings. The proposed tower will negatively affect the experience that Vancouverites and tourists have when passing this point (further discussed below).

### Building Design

Following the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, HVS believes that the tower is far from physically and visually compatible with, and subordinate to Waterfront Station in the first place, and the Landing additionally. While the developer argues that the design of the tower complements the two heritage buildings visually and spatially, we do not feel this is the case. The attempts to do so are limited to aligning the tower's podium piece design with architectural components of Waterfront Station and the Landing.

HVS does not see how the design “physically connects to the waterfront”, and instead believes that it obstructs pedestrians from entering the waterfront and the yet to be realized area as part of the Central Waterfront Hub Framework. Although the proposed tower does not obstruct any view cones, the tower would only leave half of the current view at grade level from Cordova Street. The transparent design of the bottom floors (up to the height of Waterfront Station) do not resolve this problem, since the interior design would obstruct the view of the mountains. It is furthermore questionable to what extent the viewing platform at the fourth level of the tower is accessible to the public.

As part of the Heritage Impact Assessment, the applicant has provided examples of contemporary buildings next to heritage buildings. Some of these show a strong attempt to fit a contemporary building into the historical context of the site. One example provided by the applicant that does this is Switch House which is the contemporary addition to Bankside Power Station in London, now redeveloped into Tate Modern. Switch House does this by referencing the industrial setting while articulating a contrast with the older building through the use of materials. We hope that any future building at the 555 West Cordova site can do more with examples like this for good contextualization.

#### **Plaza**

HVS sees significant opportunities for the plaza to be activated as an inviting public space, a better access point to the surrounding buildings, and a place for learning about the heritage of the area. The current design, in combination with the tower, closes off, rather than opens up entry to the waterfront.

Based on what is presented above, HVS urges the Development Permit Board to:

- Not proceed with the development application for 555 West Cordova Street until a detailed future plan for the Central Waterfront Hub Framework is realized;
- Consider the Transfer of Density for Waterfront Station to a location within the Central Waterfront Hub Framework area, or another location, to respect the current heritage setting.
- Explore the opportunities to enhance the heritage value of the area by means of a public space, such as a plaza or park-like setting, that respects the view of the mountains and the area’s connection to the use of land and water, including the First Nations relationship to place.

Respectfully submitted,

Heritage Vancouver Society