

STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

Revised Submission

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP001119
(4800 Uplands Drive & 6035 Linley Valley Drive)

Applicant: MACDONALD GRAY CONSULTANTS (Nigel Gray)

Owner: NORTHVIEW REIT

Architect: HARPER ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN INC (Troy Harper)

Landscape Architect: MACDONALD GRAY CONSULTANTS (Cara MacDonald)

Subject Property:

<i>Zoning</i>	R8 – Medium Density Residential
<i>Location</i>	The subject properties are located on the east side of Uplands Drive, across the street from Longwood Station commercial development.
<i>Total Area</i>	2.8 ha
<i>Official Community Plan (OCP)</i>	Map 1 – Future Land Use Plans – Corridor; Map 3 – Development Permit Area No. 5 – Steep Slope Development; Map 3 – Development Permit Area No. 9 - Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, Multiple Family and Mixed Commercial/Residential Development.
<i>Relevant Design Guidelines</i>	General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines Steep Slope Development Permit Area Design Guidelines

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application was received by the Design Advisory Panel on November 8, 2018. The Panel did not support the application as presented and recommended that the applicant revise the project to better relate to the buildings to the site and to improve the building form and character. Staff subsequently met with the applicant to discuss a number of design considerations and the applicant submitted a revised proposal for the Panel's consideration. Key design revisions, as outlined in Section 5.0 Appendix of the applicant's Design Rationale, include:

1. Reviewed the opportunity to step the building foundation to respond to existing grades along Uplands Drive and determined this would significantly impact the efficiency of the underground parkade, which is required by an existing covenant to contain 90% of the required parking underground;
2. Reduced height of the retaining wall along Uplands Drive by exposing a portion of the parkade wall (with stone veneer);
3. Proposing a stepped vegetated retaining wall instead of a near vertical wall face;
4. Revised building facades with broader material palette and colours changes, and more prominent architectural features (e.g. balcony supports) to break up the building mass and strengthen the building articulation;
5. Strengthened building entrances and facades with articulated gabled roof form;
6. Covered balconies have been fully integrated into the rooflines of the buildings;

7. Added more robust cultured stone wall to second and third floor balconies above the entrances to help anchor the building and create a more dominant visual threshold;
8. Redesigned the connection and covering between Buildings 1 and 2 to better integrate with the building design;
9. Stone and Hardie board accents have been added to anchor the building and distinguish the ground level from upper levels;
10. Added vertical screens to the ground level units and overhead pergolas between patios to strengthen the human scale and ground orientation of the buildings;
11. Different colour applications for exterior siding materials will be used to provide greater distinction for each of the buildings;
12. An onsite wayfinding strategy will include directional signage and building addresses;
13. Revised corner of Building 3 at site entrance (off Linley Valley Road) in order to soften the corner condition and anchor the building with a feature wall including stone veneer and Hardie board shingles, foundation landscaping and a shade tree at the corner;
14. The applicant has prepared 3D renderings to better illustrate the internal campus and street views of the buildings and how the retaining wall and buildings relate to the surrounding neighbourhood; and,
15. Labelling has been added to the planting plans to better distinguish areas for tree retention and proposed raingarden/bio-swale areas.

The proposed development is comprised of 3 four-storey buildings containing a total of 251 multi-family units (1 and 2 bedroom units). The total floor area is 23,909m². The unit composition and building size range is as follows:

- Building 1 – 6,753m²; 70 units
- Building 2 – 1,699m²; 70 units
- Building 3 – 10,403m²; 111 units

A gym is provided as amenity space in each building.

The R8 zone allows a floor area ratio (FAR) of 1.25. The total proposed floor area onsite is 0.86.

Site Context

The vacant subject properties are bordered along the north property line by a new commercial development currently under construction (La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries and Dodd's Furniture), and two vacant lots zoned for medium density development. Established multi-family neighbourhoods are located to the east and south, and a new multi-family development is located to the northeast at 6025 Linley Valley Drive. The site is located within walking distance to the North Nanaimo Town Centre.

Site Design

A portion of the subject site (contained within 4800 Uplands Drive) is designated as a steep slope along Uplands Drive. The steep slope will be replaced with a terraced, landscaped Allan Block retaining wall. The existing requirement to maintain a 21-30m landscape buffer along the east property line has resulted in a more compact building campus arrangement. Significant vegetation retention and re-vegetation is proposed within the buffer area to mimic a natural forested condition. The proposed site design concentrates development in the centre of the property where the natural plateau occurs, in order to minimize site disturbance and preserve portions of the site.

A landscaped parking court is located in the centre of the site, with hard-surfaced (multi-modal) pathway connections to the buildings, parking areas and ground level units. A public multi-modal trail connection is provided through the site along the north property line, providing a connection through the site from Longwood Station (Uplands Drive) to Linley Valley Drive. Additional trail connections are provided throughout the site, including a connection to Uplands Drive in the southeast corner of the site where there is an existing footpath connection.

There are two access points: one off Uplands Drive and the other off Linley Valley Drive. The majority of the parking is underground. An internal road network leads to each building and underground parking access is located in front of Building 2, which services all of the buildings. Surface parking is arranged between buildings around the parking court at the centre of the site and in front of Building 2, and is not visible from Uplands Drive. Accessible parking is also available in front of Building 1.

Short-term bicycle parking is provided in front of each building and long-term bicycle parking is located in the parking garage.

The majority of parking (90%) is provided underground while the remaining surface parking is centralized between the buildings out of street view; screened from neighbouring properties; broken up with landscape islands, and conveniently located near building entrances and pathways.

Building Design

The proposed building design for the three residential buildings works with basic four-storey rectilinear masses and utilizes the following architectural features:

- Series of pitched gable roofs with shed roofs at 'bookends' of the buildings;
- Covered balconies within vertical structure bays which extend from the ground plane into the roofline to provide vertical breaks in the building mass and visual interest;
- Material finishes of cultured stone and Hardie shingles and siding of different colours to articulate vertical and horizontal building wall faces.

Staff Comments:

- The revised building facades, material palette, and gabled roofline better articulate the buildings and are more characteristic of existing developments in the Longwood neighbourhood.

Landscape Design

The proposed landscape plan has both a residential and natural character that retains much of the urban forest along the east side of the property and utilizes scale appropriate trees, and low growing shrubs and ground covers to define parking, driving and amenity areas. There are several amenity spaces located throughout the site, including the following:

- A natural play area, which includes a swing set, rolling berms, a tunnel and parents' pavilion;
- A free program open space (large enough for a small soccer field);
- A central plaza area located in the centre of the site defined by raised planters and planting beds, and includes picnic tables and other seating options;
- A sheltered plaza space between Buildings 1 and 2 overlooking Uplands Drive; and,

- Small seating areas and pergolas located throughout the site, adjacent to hard surface pathways.

An internal pathway connects the buildings, parking areas, amenity spaces and ground floor entrances. Two bioswales are proposed along the northwest and northeast sides of Building 3.

An Allan Block retaining wall along the Uplands Drive frontage will be softened using 4 or 5 terraced benches with landscaping (approximately 1.2m high and 0.8 to 1.2m wide) to green the wall and allow safe egress from the buildings while minimizing the slope cut along the street edge. A railing/fence will be installed to follow the top of the retaining wall, with the steepest portion being at the southeast corner of Building 1. At the top of the embankment is a relatively flat plateau. There will be substantial excavation to accommodate the required underground parking; however, the finished grade of the development will be similar to what currently exists and the open areas will be re-vegetated.

Native and non-native climbing species re-vegetation planting mixes are proposed on the retaining wall. The plant material selected is primarily native based on the bio-inventory of the site, and where non-native species are proposed, they were selected for their drought tolerance and 'native appearance.'

There are no knolls, ridgelines, bedrock outcrops, cliffs or ravines, or environmentally sensitive areas within the subject properties.

Staff Comments:

- The revised green wall reduces the verticality of this feature and allows the opportunity to maintain a green edge along Uplands Drive.

PROPOSED VARIANCES

To better articulate the roofline and address DAP comments regarding the horizontality of the buildings, the applicant is requesting a height variance for a small percentage of the roof area to allow some variation roof peak heights to add visual interest, including:

- Buildings 1, 2 and 3 increase height by 2.43m to peak the roof over the building entrances;
- Buildings 1 and 2 increase height by 1.0m to allow smaller peaks by Gridlines B, D, G and J; and
- Building 3 increase height by 1.0m to allow smaller peaks by Gridlines 2, 4, 6, J, L and N.