

DATE OF MEETING | April 29, 2019

AUTHORED BY | DAVE STEWART, PLANNER, CURRENT PLANNING

**SUBJECT | DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP1127 –  
337 ROBSON STREET**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present for Council's consideration, a development permit application for a five-storey multiple-family development that includes 31 rental units with underground parking.

### **Recommendation**

That Council issue Development Permit DP1127 at 337 Robson Street with the following variances:

- increase the maximum allowable height from 12m to 16.08m; and
- reduce the parking requirement from 14 spaces to 12 spaces.

## **BACKGROUND**

A development permit application, DP1127, was received from 337 Robson Property Inc. (Meridian Modular) in order to permit a 31-unit multiple-family development. The property is within the Old City Neighbourhood Association boundary.

The applicants are proposing a unique modular construction that is the first of its kind to be constructed in Nanaimo.

A development permit (DP550) was previously approved in 2010 for a mixed-use development on the property, but the permit expired. The new proposal maximizes the opportunity for residential infill in the Downtown.

### **Subject Property**

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Zoning</i>                        | DT2 - Fitzwilliam   |
| <i>Location</i>                      | The subject property is located on the southwest side of Robson Street within the Old City neighbourhood.   |
| <i>Lot Area</i>                      | 497.5m <sup>2</sup>   |
| <i>Official Community Plan (OCP)</i> | Map 1 – Future Land Use Plan – Urban Node (Downtown)<br>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<br>Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines  |

The subject property is a small vacant downtown lot currently used as an unpaved, privately-owned parking lot. No trees or other significant vegetation exist on the lot. The property represents the northern-most of a series of undeveloped downtown lots on the western side of Robson Street. Future development of the vacant lots will continue to define the character of the area and establish the streetscape.

The property is directly south of the St. Andrew's United Church, a recognized heritage building. An office building located within a converted two-storey single residential dwelling is located to the rear of the subject property.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Proposed Development**

The proposed development is a five-storey multiple-family development that includes 31 studio rental units with underground parking. Units range in size from 29.4m<sup>2</sup> to 36.6m<sup>2</sup>.

The DT2 zone permits a base Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 2.3 with an additional 0.45 FAR available by achieving Tier 2 of the Schedule D Amenity Requirements for Additional Density in "City of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500" (the "Zoning Bylaw"). The proposed FAR is 2.74 and as such, the applicant proposes to provide a number of amenities in order to achieve the additional density:

- street trees and landscape trees on the second level of the building;
- a green roof and rooftop garden;
- underground parking;
- a carshare vehicle and parking space;
- an electrical charging station for parking provided onsite;
- two designated, covered motorcycle/scooter parking spaces;
- building design that exceeds ASHRAE 90.1 2010 Energy Standards by 5% or more;
- plumbing features that use 35% less water than the BC Building Code standard;
- accessible units; and
- rental housing.

Although not required to meet the Schedule D amenity requirements, the applicant proposes to provide solar panels on the roof and public art on the south side of the building.

### *Site Design*

The proposed building covers the entire site with 100% lot coverage as permitted in the DT2 zone. Access to the underground parking will be provided by a two-way drive aisle (located in the centre of the property) off Robson Street. The centre portion of the building is set back from Robson Street to accommodate the parkade entrance and short-term bicycle parking. The pedestrian entrance is located along Robson Street at the southeast corner of the building.

The proposed development requires 14 parking spaces. Eleven underground parking spaces are provided onsite, and two additional parking spaces will be provided on the adjacent

St. Andrew's United Church property (315 Fitzwilliam Street). The carshare space will be provided on-street on Fitzwilliam Street.

#### *Building Design*

The subject property is located within Section H (City Hall/Core) of the Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines, which encourages ground floor residential use along Robson Street.

The proposed building will be assembled using a modular pre-fabricated system. The front façade of the five-storey building includes a two-column element at zero lot line, with wood-lock cladding framing the corners of the building. The remainder of the front façade is set back from the street in order to break up the massing of the building and allow for underground parking access. The Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines encourage a 1.5m setback from Robson Street. The central portion of the upper storey is set back slightly further (approximately 2m) to allow an open deck and further articulation of the building. Balconies on each level add visual interest to the building and provide eyes on the street to promote natural surveillance. The front entrance is defined by an overhead deck and prominent glazing.

The rear elevation includes a more pronounced tiered design. The second floor of the building is set back 4.75m and the upper floor is set back an additional 6m. By stepping back the building on these floors, the applicant is able to provide landscaped rooftop terraces and better transition to the existing two-storey office building to the rear.

### **Proposed Variances**

#### *Height of Buildings*

The maximum allowable height for a principal building within the DT2 zone is 12m. The proposed building height is 16.08; a proposed variance of 4.08m.

As the applicant is securing additional density through Schedule D of the Zoning Bylaw, additional height is necessary in order to utilize this density. Some of the additional height (approximately 1m) is needed due to the modular construction system, which according to the applicants, adds an additional 16cm per floor compared to conventional construction. Based on the applicant's view analysis, the proposed height variance will not negatively impact the view of the harbour from upland Old City Quarter properties. The proposed height is not inclusive of the stairwell access to the sustainable building technologies (green roof and the solar panels), which are exempt from building height requirements.

Staff support the proposed height variance.

#### *Off-Street Parking*

The City of Nanaimo "Off Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266" (the "Parking Bylaw") requires 14 parking spaces for the proposed use on the subject property. The applicants are providing 11 parking spaces onsite and propose to pay cash-in-lieu for 1 space, so a proposed parking variance of 2 spaces is required. The Parking Bylaw permits up to 10% of the required parking to be reduced through a cash-in-lieu payment of \$10,000/space. The funds will be used to support sustainable transportation initiatives (e.g., bus shelter, bike lane improvements, etc.)

The two additional parking spaces will be provided on the adjacent property (315 Fitzwilliam Street). The applicant and the adjacent property owner have agreed in principal to a five-year lease to secure the parking spaces. The Parking Bylaw permits off-site parking where the adjacent property owner enters into a covenant with the City and subject property owner to secure the off-site parking. The adjacent property owner does not wish to enter into the required covenant, and as such, the variance is necessary. The required parking will; however, be secured through the lease for a minimum of five years, with the option to renew the lease.

In addition to the 2 off-site parking spaces, the applicants have entered into an agreement with Modo Co-operative (Modo) to purchase a carshare vehicle for Modo's use. The carshare vehicle will be located on Fitzwilliam Street, approximately 65m from the subject property. All subject property tenants will be gifted Modo carshare memberships. An additional carshare vehicle is available at the transit service on Prideaux Street (270m from the subject property). In addition to the vehicle, the applicants and Modo have agreed to provide all 31 tenants with carshare memberships. It is expected the carshare vehicle purchase will reduce the need for vehicle ownership for tenants of the subject property and benefit other surrounding existing multiple-family developments.

The subject property is located within the Downtown Mobility Hub and is within 70m of a bus stop and 270m of the Downtown Transit Exchange. A wide range of goods and services are available within walking distance. The proposed units are all smaller (29m<sup>2</sup> to 36m<sup>2</sup>) studio rentals and it is expected that a number of tenants may not own a vehicle.

Staff support the proposed parking variance.

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Development Permit Application No. DP1127 is for a five-storey, 31-unit, multiple-family rental development.
- The development includes a number of amenities required to achieve Tier 2 additional density available through Schedule D of the Zoning Bylaw.
- The proposed building will be assembled using a modular pre-fabricated system, which is new to Nanaimo.
- The applicant is requesting building height and parking variances. Staff support the proposed variances.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| ATTACHMENT A: | Permit Terms and Conditions                              |
| ATTACHMENT B: | Location Plan  |
| ATTACHMENT C: | Site Plan and Project Data                               |
| ATTACHMENT D: | Context Map and Location Plans                           |
| ATTACHMENT E: | Parking Plans  |
| ATTACHMENT F: | Building Elevations                                      |
| ATTACHMENT G: | Building Renderings                                      |
| ATTACHMENT H: | Streetscapes   |
| ATTACHMENT I: | Landscape Plan   |
| ATTACHMENT J: | Schedule D - Amenity Requirements for Additional Density |
| ATTACHMENT K: | Aerial Photo   |

### **Submitted by:**

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Current Planning

### **Concurrence by:**

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