

## STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

### DEVELOPMENT PERMIT NO. DP001156 – 618 AND 666 FITZWILLIAM STREET

**Applicant/Architect:** S2 ARCHITECTURE

**Owner:** CITY OF NANAIMO

**Landscape Architect:** MURDOCH DE GREEF

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### SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SITE CONTEXT

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| <i>Zoning</i>                        | DT2 - Fitzwilliam  |
| <i>Location</i>                      | The subject properties are located at the north east corner of Fitzwilliam and Milton Streets.   |
| <i>Total Area</i>                    | Approximately 2,935m <sup>2</sup><br>(total lot area to be confirmed following road closure and lot consolidation)   |
| <i>Official Community Plan (OCP)</i> | Map 1 – Future Land Use Plan – Neighbourhood<br>Map 3 – Development Permit Area DPA No. 9 – Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, Multiple Family, and Mixed Commercial / Residential Development |
| <i>Relevant Design Guidelines</i>    | General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines; and<br>Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines  |

The subject properties are located in the Old City Neighbourhood and currently contain the City of Nanaimo's Fire Station No.1. The existing fire station was built in 1966 and is nearing the end of its operable lifespan. The subject properties slope slightly downhill from west to east and are situated at a key entrance gateway to Downtown Nanaimo via Fitzwilliam Street.

The surrounding neighbourhood is a transitional area between more intensive commercial uses to the east and residential uses to the west. Nearby properties include single residential dwellings, low-density commercial uses, multi-family residential buildings, and commercial services. The Nanaimo Detachment of the RCMP is located across Fitzwilliam Street to the south.

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is proposing to develop a new three-storey 2,109.2m<sup>2</sup> fire station to replace the existing station. The proposed station will be located at 618 Fitzwilliam Street, behind the existing station, so that operations can continue in the existing building during the new station's construction. Another aspect of the fire station's redevelopment is a concurrent road closure application to close the adjacent road right-of-way known as Lubbock Square to the east that is currently used for parking. The road closure is anticipated to complete later this year. A portion of this closed road right-of-way and the two lots will be consolidated into a single property to facilitate this development.

The proposed building will have a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.72, less than the maximum permitted FAR of 2.3.

### Site Design

The new building is sited on the eastern portion of the site and close to Fitzwilliam Street, in order to avoid conflict with the existing structure and to provide better access for emergency vehicles exiting onto Milton Street and to maximize street presence along Fitzwilliam Street. There are no minimum or maximum setbacks from any lot lines in the DT2 zone, so the structure can be sited close to the property lines without any setback variances.

The primary pedestrian entrance will be from the sidewalk on Fitzwilliam Street and the vehicle entrances will be from Milton Street. Five parking stalls are proposed next to the emergency vehicle drive aisle, and an additional nine parking stalls are proposed in a separate parking area closer to the building's front door. Garbage and recycling pick-up will be from the rear of the new station, in a closed portion of Lubbock Square.

#### Staff Comments:

- The area of the vehicle drive aisle is functionally necessary to accommodate emergency vehicles exiting and entering the building and results in the building being set further back from Milton Street. Consider opportunities to further utilize the site features to provide a visual connection to Milton Street.
- The size of the area from Lubbock Square to be consolidated with the subject properties will be confirmed following the road closure. Additional site area to the northeast may be included.
- Truck access to the garbage and recycling receptacles will need to be confirmed.

### Building Design:

The building is contemporary in design and reflects its use. The form and character references heritage themes in Nanaimo as well as traditional fire station elements. The applicant has cited the Nanaimo Harbour and coal mining history as some inspirations in the building's design. Fibre cement panel cladding will cover most of the building, and phenolic panel cladding will be used on the prominent projecting features.

The building's massing relates strongly to Fitzwilliam Street and provides significant street presence. The building will frame the entrance to Downtown Nanaimo when arriving via Fitzwilliam Street. A projecting entryway will draw attention to the front entrance. The southeast corner of the building will feature significant windows on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors that provide transparency to the building mass.

The ground floor of the building will be primarily for emergency response and a garage for the fire trucks. The upper floors will contain offices and a dispatch centre. An outdoor amenity space is being considered on the third floor.

#### Staff Comments:

- The proposed building relates well to Fitzwilliam Street and the massing is sympathetic to nearby structures.
- Consider further detailing or contrasting panels to break up the blank wall area on the east elevation.

### Landscape Design

A large portion of the site will be required for the impervious fire truck drive aisle, but landscaping will be concentrated along Fitzwilliam Street, between the parking area and the drive aisle, and to the north of the drive aisle. Two raingardens are proposed, at the northwest corner of the site and in the centre of the site. A stone installation is proposed outside of the front entrance on Fitzwilliam Street.

A public outdoor gathering area is envisioned for the corner of Milton and Fitzwilliam Streets. A future public art display will be featured here.

#### Staff Comments:

- The possibility of a landscape buffer around the garbage and recycling receptacles will be reviewed.

## **PROPOSED VARIANCES**

### Building Height

The maximum allowable building height in the D2 zone is 12m. The proposed building height is 15m, a proposed variance of 3m.

### Parking

As there is no defined parking rate for a 'fire station' use in the Off-Street Parking Bylaw, the nearest comparable use is 'office' which would require 49 parking spaces onsite. The proposed plans show 14 parking spaces onsite and Staff are working with the applicant to determine the appropriate parking rate and variance request.