

# STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

## DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP001187 – 550 BRECHIN ROAD

**Applicant:** WESTURBAN DEVELOPMENTS LTD.

**Architect:** THUJA ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

**Landscape Architect:** LAZZARIN SVISDAHL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

**Owner:** 1228590 BC LTD.

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### SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SITE CONTEXT

<i>Zoning</i>	R8 – Medium Density Residential
<i>Location</i>	The subject property is located on the north side of Brechin Road, adjacent to Beach Drive and the BC Ferries Departure Bay Terminal.
<i>Total Area</i>	0.52ha
<i>Official Community Plan (OCP)</i>	Map 1 – Future Land Use Plan – Neighbourhood Map 3 – Development Permit Area DPA No. 5 – Steep Slope Development; and 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; Newcastle + Brechin Neighbourhood Plan Urban Design Framework and Guidelines; and Steep Slope Development Permit Area Guidelines

The subject property is a forested and steeply-sloped lot in the Newcastle + Brechin Neighbourhood, immediately uphill from the BC Ferries Departure Bay Terminal. The lot is bound by the exit lanes from the ferry terminal to the east, Brechin Road which is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) to the south, and Beach Drive to the west. An existing section of the Nanaimo Waterfront Walkway crosses through the BC Ferries property adjacent to the subject property.

From 1979 until 1993, the subject property was zoned Tourist Commercial Zone which allowed for both commercial and higher density residential uses. Since 1993 the property has been zoned for medium density residential use only. Surrounding land uses, notwithstanding the ferry terminal, are primarily single residential dwellings along both Brechin Road and Beach Drive.

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is proposing to construct a 4-storey multi-family rental residential building with 87 dwelling units and under-the-building parking. The proposed building will have a gross floor area of 6,864m<sup>2</sup>, excluding the two levels of parking. The proposed unit mix is as follows:

- 3 studio units approximately 37m<sup>2</sup> in area
- 44 one-bedroom units approximately 57m<sup>2</sup> in area; and
- 40 two-bedroom units between approximately 71m<sup>2</sup> and 79m<sup>2</sup> in area.

The proposed Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is 1.32, which is below the maximum permitted FAR of 1.40 in the R8 zone where 60% of the parking is provided underground.

### Site Design

The proposed development will be sited to face Beach Drive and Brechin Road, with a 45 degree bend in the building to mimic the intersection of the two streets. The ground floor will be sunken slightly below street level, requiring a ramp and staircase from Beach Drive to the front entrance. The vehicle entrance is proposed from Beach Drive, in the northwest corner of the site. A common outdoor patio space is proposed on the rear side of the building, facing Departure Bay.

The 10m grade difference on-site will be supported by a series of retaining walls to the northeast of the proposed building, on the downhill portion of the lot, which will range in height from 3m to 4m.

#### Staff Comments:

- Provide direct pedestrian connections for ground-level units with Beach Drive where possible.
- Look at ways to increase outdoor amenity space on-site and improve pedestrian circulation around the site.
- Review opportunities to provide a pedestrian connection to the existing Waterfront Walkway adjacent to the subject property.
- Provide details for all proposed retaining walls and consider reducing wall heights to no greater than 3m where possible, as recommended by the Steep Slope Development Permit Area Guidelines (Steep Slope Guidelines).

### Building Design

The proposed building design is residential in nature with outdoor balconies or patios provided for all units. A striking 4-storey entryway with steel columns and a rising roofline will be featured prominently facing the Beach Drive and Brechin Road intersection. A number of the windows will feature window boxes that will provide visual interest on the street-facing elevations.

A mix of light and dark fibre cement siding will present a west coast wood tone. The exposed wall of the ramp between parking levels, facing southeast, will feature a perforated corten steel screen.

#### Staff Comments:

- Consider opportunities to break the long horizontal roofline and step the building down with the existing terrain.
- Address blank wall elevations with further detailing and glazing, for example on the northwest and southeast elevations.
- Look at reducing vertical massing (for example, consider lighter materials on the upper floors, a shallower roof overhang, and/or projecting a 2-storey mass for ground-level units).
- Reduce the scale of the main entry to better respect the lower density characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood.

### Landscape Design

Robust planting is proposed throughout the site and along its perimeter. The Brechin Road and Beach Drive frontages will feature 13 red obelisk beech trees and a mix of shrubs including creeping Oregon grape and red spirea. Tall Oregon grape and a cluster of mountain pine trees will act as a buffer along the north property line adjacent to the neighbouring single residential

dwelling. Significant landscaping is proposed throughout the sloping portion of the site to the northeast, including Scots pine, pacific dogwood, oceanspray, salal, and a number of other species. A raingarden is proposed at the base of the retaining walls to provide stormwater retention. The southeast corner of the site, facing Brechin Road, will contain another significant landscaped area featuring trees, shrubs, and boulders to blend in with the natural topography.

Staff Comments:

- Demonstrate that the Minimum Landscape Treatment Level can be met along the north property line between the drive aisle and the neighbouring R1-zoned property.
- Review opportunities to retain existing trees where possible along the property line adjacent to the BC Ferries property.
- Ensure appropriate planting is provided to screen retaining walls.
- Provide details for the garbage enclosure and the required landscape buffer.

## PROPOSED VARIANCES

### Maximum Building Height

The maximum height of a building in the R8 zone is 14m. The proposed building height is 14.75m, a requested variance of 0.75m.

### Maximum Retaining Wall Height

The maximum height of a retaining wall outside of a setback area is 3m. The proposed retaining wall height is 4m, a requested variance of 1m.