

# STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

## DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP001191 – 326 WAKESIAH AVENUE

**Applicant:** IBI GROUP ARCHITECTS LTD.

**Architect:** WA ARCHITECTS LTD.

**Landscape Architect:** LOMBARD NORTH GROUP INC.

**Owner:** SHZT INVESTMENTS CANADA INC.

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### SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SITE CONTEXT

<i>Current Zoning</i>	Single Dwelling Residential (R1) and Residential Corridor (COR1)
<i>Proposed Zoning</i>	Mixed Use Corridor (COR2)
<i>Location</i>	The subject property is located on the east side of Wakesiah Avenue between Third Street and Foster Street, and a portion of the property fronts on the west side of Hillcrest Avenue.
<i>Total Area</i>	4,390m <sup>2</sup>
<i>Official Community Plan (OCP)</i>	Map 1 – Future Land Use Plan – Corridor 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 Harewood Neighbourhood Plan Urban Design Framework and Guidelines

The subject property was recently consolidated from three separate lots and currently contains three existing single residential dwellings. The property is located in a developing area of the Harewood Neighbourhood and Vancouver Island University (VIU) is located approximately 275m south of the site. Wakesiah Avenue is a major road and is a significant transportation corridor providing connections between VIU and Bowen Road, and to Downtown via Third Street.

Surrounding land uses include single residential dwellings to the north, a mixed-use and townhouse development under construction across Hillcrest Avenue to the east, an existing 34-unit subsidized housing development to the south, and Nanaimo District Secondary School across Wakesiah Avenue to the west.

The property is currently under an active rezoning application (RA398) to rezone the property to COR2 with student housing permitted as a site-specific use.

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is proposing to construct a mixed-use development with 162 student housing units and 3 commercial retail units for restaurant use. The total proposed gross floor area is 7,940m<sup>2</sup> which includes 499m<sup>2</sup> for the commercial component. The proposed building is 'L'-shaped with the ground-level commercial units facing Wakesiah Avenue and student housing units above. The primary wing of the building will extend east towards Hillcrest Avenue. Parking is proposed in a combination of under-the-building and surface parking.

The student housing complex will consist of 156 one-bedroom suites, 6 two-bedroom suites, and a resident manager's suite. The one-bedroom suites will range in size from 29m<sup>2</sup> to 36m<sup>2</sup>, and the two-bedroom suites will be between 66m<sup>2</sup> to 80m<sup>2</sup>. Some of units will include outdoor balconies. Each floor of the student housing complex will contain a student lounge, a common laundry room, and storage facilities.

The applicant is proposing to achieve a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.75 through the provision of additional amenities as outlined in 'Schedule D' of the Zoning Bylaw, which is the maximum permitted FAR in the COR2 zone. Some of the amenities proposed include:

- Educational signage;
- A public pedestrian connection between Wakesiah Avenue and Hillcrest Avenue;
- Construction to exceed the required BC Energy Step Code by one step;
- A green roof; and
- Public art.

### Site Design

The proposed building is sited to best utilize the irregular shape of the consolidated property. The commercial units are oriented to face Wakesiah Avenue with ground-level entrances from the sidewalk and from the surface parking area in the rear. Articulated concrete patios will be provided for the restaurant uses in front of the commercial units. The primary pedestrian entrance to the student housing complex will be from Wakesiah Avenue.

Two vehicle accesses to the parking areas are proposed, one from Wakesiah Avenue and one from Hillcrest Avenue. Of the 60 proposed parking spaces, 50 spaces will be provided for the student housing complex and 10 spaces will be provided for the commercial units. A loading space is proposed inside of the Wakesiah Avenue entrance. 105 secure bicycle storage spaces are proposed inside the building on the ground floor, in addition to 24 exterior short-term bicycle parking spaces. Separate residential and commercial garbage rooms are provided on the ground floor of the building.

A public pedestrian walkway will connect Wakesiah Avenue and Hillcrest Avenue on the north side of the proposed building. A public art feature mural is proposed to face the walkway.

### Staff Comments:

- Distinguish the commercial parking from the student housing parking, and ensure that access to parking is available to non-resident visitors.
- One additional accessible parking stall is required. Consider adding this stall in proximity to the commercial units.
- Consider relocating more of the short-term bicycle parking to in front of the commercial units where they are more visible to visitors.
- Provide visual cues for the public walkway entrances at both the Wakesiah Avenue and Hillcrest Avenue entrances, perhaps with an arbour or projecting overhang.
- Confirm details for site lighting, particularly adjacent to the public walkway.

### Building Design

The building design provides significant visual interest through its massing, articulation, design elements, and variety of materials. On the Wakesiah Avenue frontage, a pattern of protruding windows and recessed balconies is bookended by larger balconies for the corner units. The rhythm on this elevation is interrupted by the prominent front entryway to the student housing component and is capped by a feature metal overhang. The ground-level commercial units

feature significant fenestration that signals the commercial use and provides a visual base for the building facing Wakesiah Avenue.

The north and east elevations will continue the rhythm with balconies on both sides. The ground-level under-the-building parking will be screened by a concrete wall where the public mural will be featured. The building on the south elevation will overhang the under-the building parking and be supported by painted columns. No balconies are proposed on the south elevation of the south wing except for the wraparound balconies on the corner units.

The exterior materials will include a mix of corrugated metal, acrylic stucco, Hardie panel, and woodgrain pattern panel for the recessed balconies.

**Staff Comments:**

- Look at providing more glazing on the street-facing elevation at the end of the east wing facing Hillcrest Avenue and strengthen the detailing at ground level adjacent to the vehicle entrance.
- Explore opportunities for more pronounced vertical breaks in the long horizontal rooflines.
- Strengthen the supporting columns on the south elevation, perhaps with more significant cladding, to provide a stronger visual base.
- Consider expanding the student lounges or providing balconies for the lounges where possible.
- Confirm rooftop equipment screening materials.

**Landscape Design**

Street trees are proposed in the boulevard along the Wakesiah Avenue frontage. A landscape buffer in front of a solid board lattice fence along the east property lines will include columnar deciduous trees and rows of medium to large shrubs. A laurel hedge and black chain link fence are proposed along the north property line.

An outdoor amenity space is proposed in the rear of the building, adjacent to the surface parking area. This amenity space will include benches, garden plots for residents, and a lawn.

**Staff Comments:**

- Demonstrate that the Minimum Landscape Buffer Treatment Level can be provided along the Wakesiah Avenue frontage and along the north property line. Consider including raised garden beds to separate the concrete patios on the Wakesiah Avenue frontage, and consider a wider variety and columnar planting along the north property line (adjacent to the public walkway).
- Consider enlarging the outdoor amenity space to provide more opportunities for social interaction with seating and gathering spaces.

**PROPOSED VARIANCES**

***Off-Street Parking***

A variance to reduce the required parking from 77 parking stalls to 60 parking stalls is requested, a proposed variance of 17 parking stalls.