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Project No. 17018

Design Rationale Wakesiah Student Housing Project

308 & 328 Wakesiah Ave. and 307 Hillcrest Ave., Nanaimo, BC

WA Architects Ltd.

| PRINCIPALS

Barry Weih
ARCHITECT, AIBC, AAA
SAA, LEED® AP

Neil Banich
DESIGN DIRECTOR

Joel Smith
ARCHITECT, AIBC, AAA, SAA

David Echaiz-McGrath
ARCHITECT, AIBC, AAA, SAA

| STUDIOS

VAN
301 — 1444 Alberni Street
Vancouver, BC V6G 2Z4
604.685.3529

VIC
104 — 3212 Jacklin Road
Victoria, BC V9B 0J5
250.391.4933

wa-arch.ca

The Wakesiah Student Housing project is located directly across from Nanaimo District Secondary School and Vancouver Island University. Its location makes it ideal for this type of programming and furthers City of Nanaimo's vision for this area as the "University Precinct."

The proposed development is a modern, efficient student housing facility that will serve the Vancouver Island University's urgent need for student accommodations.

This project consists of a total of 162 units, most of them studios, as well as some two bedroom units, above 3 commercial retail spaces (total of 5,183 sf) and a bike storage room (104 bike stalls.) This project provides residents with 62 parking stalls and a loading bay. All parking is incorporated into building design, with most stalls being inside the covered parkade, and the remaining stalls being located in the inner courtyard, shielded from the view by the building form.

Access to the parkade has been provided from both Wakesiah Ave and Hillcrest Ave to minimize the impact of traffic on both these streets. A public pedestrian sidewalk connecting Wakesiah Ave and Hillcrest Ave has been provided along the north property line.

Each floor contains 54 student apartments with shared laundry facilities, a student lounge, and storage lockers. Only 40% of the total units are provided with outdoor balconies to allow for dynamic, interesting façade, while limiting potential noise transmission to neighbouring properties. All opportunity has been taken to provide as much green space and amenity as possible. A productive garden is also provided for the residents, allowing an opportunity to grow vegetables if desired.

A modern FUN design aesthetic is being proposed for this project, to capture the spirit of its' prospect residents. Clean lines of a simple parti combined with a pop of bold colour, and a feature graffiti art wall will ensure this building has presence in the neighbourhood for years to come. The parti consists of solid forms connected together by the 'links' – this design concept is rigorously continued around the building, with a surprise peekaboo pop of colour you discover when you experience the building from different angles. The links bring to mind concepts of unity, togetherness, community, and holding of hands.

Proposed graffiti wall will become *Public Art* in all senses of the word: for public to make and for public to enjoy. We envision this wall as a canvas for local artists and community members to create vibrant and exciting art (permanent or ever-



changing,) to be enjoyed by all. This graffiti wall would be part of an essential pedestrian corridor - a link - connecting the neighbourhood with the University and the Community Centre. It will act as an outdoors art gallery, one that can be further expanded as future adjacent properties are developed, to become a true public forum, a place of community participation and engagement.

Durable materials and large windows will provide a comfortable, bright living space for students to call home. The commercial spaces on the ground floor will provide cafés and sandwich shops to accommodate student living.

Plentiful indoor and outdoor bike storage, adjacency to an established bus stop, and walking distance proximity to the University and Taylor Place Park will naturally encourage the use of alternative transportation. Overall, this project is a great fit for the area in both program and aesthetic and is bound to be a popular housing choice amongst Vancouver Island University students and others.

Xeniya Vins

Architect

WA Architecture Ltd.