

STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP001202 – 427, 449, & 455 NICOL STREET

Applicant: ISLAND WEST COAST DEVELOPMENT LTD.

Architect: WA ARCHITECTS LTD.

Landscape Architect: VICTORIA DRAKEFORD LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Owner: NICOL STREET HOLDINGS LTD.

SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SITE CONTEXT

<i>Zoning</i>	Community Corridor (COR3)
<i>Location</i>	The subject property is located on the east side of Nicol Street, midblock between Farquhar Street and Needham Street.
<i>Total Area</i>	1,645m ²
<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 South End Neighbourhood Plan Urban Design Guidelines

The subject properties are located in the South End Neighbourhood and are currently vacant. The site is located on a prominent entry corridor to downtown Nanaimo on Nicol Street, which is under the jurisdiction of the Province as part of Highway #1. The properties slope downhill from west to east. At the rear, the properties abut a one-way lane that runs parallel to Nicol Street between Farquhar Street and Needham Street.

Surrounding land uses are primarily lower density residential uses which include single residential dwellings, duplexes, and triplexes. The site is approximately 90m south of the southern extent of the Downtown Gateway (DT12) zone and is approximately 40m northwest of the South End Neighbourhood Centre (CC2) zone. Both sides of Nicol Street are designated Corridor in the Official Community Plan (OCP) future land use map.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is proposing to construct a 4-storey multi-family rental residential building with 35 residential dwelling units and under-the-building parking. The building will face Nicol Street with a primary pedestrian entry from the front, and vehicle access from the lane in the rear. The under-the-building parking will be partially underground and partially exposed at ground level, adjacent to the lane.

The proposed unit composition is as follows:

- 8 micro-units, 29m² in floor area;
- 15 one-bedroom units between 46m² and 72m² in floor area; and
- 12 two-bedroom units between 77m² and 84m² in floor area.

The total proposed gross floor area is 2,345m² and the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) will equal 1.43. The base maximum FAR in the COR3 zone is 0.75, and the applicant is proposing to achieve an additional 0.50 FAR through the provision of amenities as outlined for Tier 2 in 'Schedule D' of the Zoning Bylaw and an additional 0.19 FAR by providing 76% of the parking underground as per Section 9.3.2 of the Zoning Bylaw.

Site Design

The site is constrained by the requirement for vehicle access from the lane in the rear, and the setback 4.5m from Nicol Street as required by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Two dead-end drive aisles are proposed to enter the under-the-building parking level from the lane, with parking on both sides of each drive aisle. Of the 38 proposed parking stalls, 29 will be underground. The required visitor parking, accessible parking, electric vehicle parking, and bicycle parking are provided. A garbage and recycling room will be located at the rear of the building, with vehicle pick-up from the lane..

The primary pedestrian entry will be from Nicol Street at the southern end of the building and an additional exit will be provided from the north staircase. The four ground-level units will have individual walkway connections to their private patios and front doors. All other units will have decks. An outdoor communal amenity space is proposed at the north end of the site with communal seating and a children's' play area.

Staff Comments:

- Consider relocating the visitor bike rack from the outdoor amenity area to one of the entryways. One other bike rack is proposed near the front entryway.
- Provide site lighting details.

Building Design

The building design presents itself as contemporary and residential. The building's rectangular massing is aligned parallel to the street frontage. Strong framing around the balconies, front entryway, and flat roofline complement the building design. The South End Neighbourhood Plan Urban Design Guidelines are referenced by the building's emphasis on its lower three storeys which breaks up the massing on the west and east elevations. On the north and south elevations, a material change above the second storey breaks up the visual massing.

The exterior materials will include a mix of light and dark vinyl horizontal siding and cementitious panel. Exterior wood staircases are proposed on the north and south elevations.

Staff Comments:

- Consider design modifications to create an entryway at the rear doorway to allow for visitors and deliveries arriving by vehicle to enter from the rear as there is no walkway around the side of the building.
- Review the exterior staircase cladding and consider opportunities for enclosing these staircases.
- Clarify materials used in securing the under-the building parking. Ensure that adequate weather protection and off-site illumination mitigation measures are considered.
- Consider the use of glass railings for all balconies.

Landscape Design

Landscape buffering is proposed on three sides of the site. On the north and the south property lines, the landscape design includes low evergreen shrubs, grasses, and columnar deciduous trees. Retaining walls and fencing will raise the finished grade and screen the building on the north and south property lines. Cascading plants will be planted to screen the retaining walls where they face the rear lane.

Along the Nicol Street frontage, street trees will be retained and an evergreen hedge is proposed to screen the ground-level units. Small evergreen and deciduous shrubs will buffer the ground-level patios. A lawn is proposed in the outdoor communal amenity space.

Staff Comments:

- Provide details for landscaping at the surface level of the parking area, and consider opportunities for landscape islands and a landscape buffer along the rear property line.

PROPOSED VARIANCES

Off-Street Parking

A variance to reduce the required parking from 48 parking stalls to 38 parking stalls is requested, a proposed variance of 10 parking stalls.