

STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP001209 – 702 NICOL STREET

Applicant / Architect: S2 ARCHITECTURE

Owners: BC HOUSING

Landscape Architect: WSP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SITE CONTEXT:

<i>Zoning</i>	Community Corridor (COR3)
<i>Location</i>	The subject property is located on the corner of Nicol Street and Robins Street in South Nanaimo.
<i>Total Area</i>	2,430 m ²
<i>Official Community Plan (OCP)</i>	Map 1 – Future Land Use Plan – Urban Corridor Map 3 – Development Permit Area No. 9 - Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, Multiple Family and Mixed Commercial/Residential development
<i>South End Neighbourhood Plan</i>	Map 1 – Neighbourhood Land Use – Corridor Mixed Use
<i>Relevant Design Guidelines</i>	General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines South End Neighbourhood Plan – Urban Design Framework and Guidelines

The subject property is located in south Nanaimo on a vacant site bounded by Nicol Street, Robins Street, and a lane. The surrounding neighbourhood includes Value Lodge Hotel, single family homes and retail services.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is proposing a four-storey personal care facility which includes 59 supportive housing units, and an accessory community meeting space.

Site Design

The building is set back 4.5m from the front property line along Nicol Street, and the primary building entrances face Nicol Street. An outdoor amenity area, bike storage building, refuse enclosure, and heat treatment structure are proposed at the rear of the property. Vehicle access to the property is from Robins Street, and four parking spaces are located onsite. The lane at the rear will be improved and widened along the length of the property.

Staff Comments:

- BC Housing held a neighbourhood information meeting in December 2020 to obtain community input on the proposed design of the development. The applicant may present updates to the plans at the DAP meeting in response to the community input.
- Consider a demarcated pedestrian path from the proposed concrete sidewalk at the rear of the building to the Robins Street public sidewalk.

Building Design

A four-storey modular wood frame building is proposed. The main floor of the building will contain the community meeting space, offices, staff room, kitchen, laundry, lounge, dining area for residents and three residential rooms. The upper three storeys of the building contains 56 rooms for the residents which include three accessible rooms, and seven 'bridge to housing' rooms. The objective of the 'bridge to housing' rooms is to bring people inside and to help them transition to more stable and permanent housing options.

Generous glazing is proposed for the first storey facing Nicol Street, and a canopy extends along the length of the front façade, which defines the ground floor and provides interest and weather protection for the primary building entrances. The raised entry area includes both stairs and a wheelchair ramp for access. The exterior façade materials consist of fibre cement paneling and wood like fibre cement plank. The arrangement of the white fibre cement panel on the front façade breaks the massing of the building.

Staff Comments:

- Consider more prominent entry features for the two main entrances facing Nicol Street. Ideas could be to locate the stairs so they extend directly from the building entrance to the Nicol Street sidewalk, a more prominent architectural element and/or colours at each of the two entrances, as well as place name and art feature at the entrances.
- To create a more residential character to the building, consider larger windows for the residential rooms on the front façade and prominent window framing.
- Consider incorporating more natural wood finishes for the exterior façade materials.
- Create more articulation and visual interest on the north and south façade walls of the building.
- Consider adding canopies for weather protection at the rear doors of the building.

Landscape Design

The landscape design includes red alder trees, Pacific white dogwood trees, Sitka spruce trees and a variety of shrubs. A 1.8m wide landscape buffer is provided along the south and rear property lines. A cedar fence, 1.5m in height, is located around the outdoor amenity area. The amenity area contains benches, a gazebo and vegetable garden planters. A hard surface pedestrian path is located around the perimeter of the building with connections to the Nicol Street sidewalk. Exterior lighting will be placed to illuminate the entrances and the pedestrian walkways.

- Consider enhancements such as landscaping, trees, public art or places to sit in the closed portion of Robins Street to create a connection to the public realm.
- Consider replacing the Sitka spruce with another tree species more appropriate for smaller urban spaces.
- Provide a profile of the retaining wall along the rear property line, with information regarding the retaining wall materials.
- Provide landscape screening for the utility box in the front yard area along Nicol Street.
- The garbage enclosure should be screened with landscaping. Consider adding landscaping on the east side of the enclosure or where visible from the public street.
- Ensure that there is accessible access from the rear of the building to the outdoor amenity area.
- Consider additional seating opportunities for visitors and staff under the main entry canopy or in the front yard area facing Nicol Street.

PROPOSED VARIANCES

Building Height

The maximum allowable building height is 14m, the proposed building height is 15.57m, a proposed variance of 1.57m.

Minimum Landscape Treatment Level

A landscape buffer, 1.8m in width, is required along the north side property line. The buffer width is proposed to be varied to 0m for that portion of the north side lot line adjacent to the four parking spaces.

Parking

The Parking Bylaw requires 0.2 parking spaces sleeping unit for the Personal Care Facility use. Twelve parking spaces are required onsite and 4 parking spaces are provided, a proposed variance of 8 parking spaces.