

DATE OF MEETING [June 7, 2021]

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**SUBJECT [DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP1191 –
326 WAKESIAH AVENUE]**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present for Council’s consideration, a development permit for a mixed-use student housing development at 326 Wakesiah Avenue.]

Recommendation

That Council issue Development Permit No. DP1191 at 326 Wakesiah Avenue with a variance to reduce the required student housing parking rate from 0.4 spaces per bed to 0.3 spaces per bed (reducing the total required parking from 77 stalls to 62 stalls).]

BACKGROUND

A development permit application, DP1191, was received from Island West Coast Developments Ltd., on behalf of S.H.Z.T. Investments Canada Inc., to permit a mixed-use student housing development at 326 Wakesiah Avenue. The subject property was rezoned by the same applicant in 2020 to Mixed Use Corridor (COR2) with student housing permitted as a site-specific use (RA398). A Housing Agreement to outline the requirements for student housing (with up to 165 student housing beds) was registered on the subject property as a condition of rezoning.

Subject Property and Site Context

<i>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 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, 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 on the opposite

side of Wakesiah Avenue approximately 275m south of the site. Wakesiah Avenue is a major road and acts as 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 residential development 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.

DISCUSSION

Proposed Development

The applicant is proposing to construct a four-storey mixed-use development with 162 student housing units and 3 commercial retail units. The total proposed gross floor area is 7,940m², which includes 499m² 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 component will consist of 156 studio units, 3 one-bedroom units, and 3 two-bedroom units, with a total of 165 student housing beds. Some of the units will include outdoor balconies. Each floor of the student housing will contain a student lounge, a common laundry room, and storage facilities.

The applicant is proposing to achieve the maximum permitted Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.75 through the provision of additional amenities to meet Tier 2 as outlined in 'Schedule D' of the "City of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500" (the "Zoning Bylaw"). Some of the proposed amenities include:

- Construction to exceed the required BC Energy Step Code by one step;
- A public pedestrian connection between Wakesiah Avenue and Hillcrest Avenue;
- A green roof;
- Dedicated outdoor garden space;
- Public art in the form of a mural wall; and
- Educational signage for the sustainable design features.

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 in front of the commercial units. The primary pedestrian entrance to the student housing component 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 62 proposed parking spaces, 51 spaces will be provided for the student housing component and 11 spaces will be provided for the commercial component. The commercial parking will be accessed from Wakesiah Avenue. The required accessible parking is

proposed as well as an electric vehicle charging station. A loading space is proposed inside of the Wakesiah Avenue entrance. There are 105 secure long-term bicycle storage spaces proposed inside the building on the ground floor, as well as 21 exterior short-term bicycle parking spaces. Separate residential and commercial garbage rooms are provided on the ground floor of the building.

A 2m-wide public pedestrian walkway will connect Wakesiah Avenue and Hillcrest Avenue on the north side of the proposed building, and a public art mural wall is proposed to face the walkway. A statutory right-of-way for the walkway was secured through rezoning.

Building Design

The building design provides significant visual interest through its massing, articulation, design elements, and variety of materials, including corrugated metal, acrylic stucco, cementitious panels, and woodgrain panels. Protruding windows and recessed balconies provide a rhythm along the Wakesiah Avenue frontage. 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 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 of the corner units.

The proposed form and character meets the intent of the design guidelines for mixed-use corridor developments as outlined in the Harewood Neighbourhood Plan Urban Design Framework and Guidelines.

Landscape Design

Street trees are proposed in the boulevard along the Wakesiah Avenue frontage. A landscape buffer in front of a solid board with lattice fence along the east property lines will include columnar deciduous trees and rows of medium to large shrubs to provide screening from adjacent properties. A laurel hedge and black chain link fence are proposed to screen the public walkway 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 student residents, and a lawn.

Design Advisory Panel

The Design Advisory Panel (DAP), at its meeting held on 2020-AUG-13, accepted DP1191 as presented and provided the following recommendations:

- Consider the overall balance of materials and colour on the elevations;
- Give consideration to adding gathering spaces to the common area landscaping; and
- Give further consideration to the north walkway regarding screening, lighting, and fence design with respect to the neighbouring properties.

The applicant subsequently submitted revised plans to address the DAP recommendations. Key site design revisions include the expansion of the outdoor amenity space and rearranging the parking layout for more efficient use of space.

Proposed Variance

Minimum Required Parking

The minimum required off-street parking for the proposed development is 77 parking spaces with a student housing rate of 0.4 spaces per bed, and the applicant is proposing 62 parking spaces at a rate of 0.3 spaces per bed, a requested variance of 15 spaces.

In accordance with the City of Nanaimo “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266” (the “Parking Bylaw”), the commercial component of the development requires 11 parking spaces and the applicant is proposing to provide the required amount of commercial parking. Section 7.2 of the Parking Bylaw outlines the parking requirements for student housing based on specified areas as delineated in Schedule B of the Parking Bylaw (see Attachment I). The subject property is located in Area 2 where 0.4 parking spaces per bed are required. The student housing component of 165 beds requires 66 parking spaces and the applicant is proposing to provide 50 parking spaces for student residents and 1 parking space for the student housing manager’s office.

As per the City’s Policy for Consideration of a Parking Variance, the applicant has provided the following documentation and rationale:

- The applicant commissioned a Parking Study, prepared by a professional transportation consultant, that concluded that the proposed parking variance is supportable.
- The subject property is located within the 200m buffer of the University Mobility Hub as identified by Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan (NTMP).
- The subject property is located on a frequent transit network as identified by the NTMP and is currently served by the #40 “VIU Express” RDN Transit bus route.
- The subject property is within walking distance of important amenities, including recreational facilities (Nanaimo Aquatic Centre and Nanaimo Ice Centre), Vancouver Island University, and commercial services.
- A Community Amenity Contribution was secured through the previous rezoning (RA398), to be directed towards active transportation improvements in the University Mobility Hub, including the opportunity to complete a study for a micromobility sharing program (e.g. electric bikes or electric scooters).
- The applicant has engaged with the neighbourhood and hosted an open house in November 2019 to present the proposal, including the parking variance.

The required student housing parking rate is 0.4 parking spaces per bed for the subject property; however, the property is directly across Wakesiah Avenue from Area 1 where the parking rate would be 0.2 spaces per bed. The proposed 50 student housing parking stalls equals a rate of 0.3 spaces per bed. The applicant has proposed this rate based on the recommendations of the Parking Study and to provide a transition in the parking rates at the boundary between Areas 1 and 2. Research conducted by the transportation consultant concluded that anticipated demand for the proposed student housing would be 0.25 spaces per bed, based in part on comparable off-campus student housing developments in Nanaimo, Victoria, and Prince George.

As an additional benefit to residents on site, the applicant has committed to provide for a period of ten years the following subsidized transit pass options for first-time student residents:

- a) a one-semester pass for all residents who sign a minimum one-year lease; and
- b) a one-month pass for all residents who sign a minimum semester-length lease.

The Parking Study concluded that a parking rate of 0.3 spaces per bed is supportable for the proposed student housing use, and providing the transit passes was recommended to further incentivize alternative transportation and manage parking demand on site. The commitment to pilot a transit pass program will be secured through a Section 219 covenant and is noted as a condition of the development permit.

Staff have reviewed and accepted the Parking Study, and Staff support the proposed parking variance.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Development Permit Application No. DP1191 is for a four-storey mixed-use building with 162 student housing units (with a total of 165 student housing beds) and 3 commercial retail units.
- The applicant is proposing 62 parking spaces with a student housing parking rate of 0.3 spaces per bed, a requested variance of 15 spaces.
- Staff support the proposed variance.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: Permit Terms and Conditions
ATTACHMENT B: Context Map
ATTACHMENT C: Location Plan
ATTACHMENT D: Site and Parking Plans
ATTACHMENT E: Building Elevations and Details
ATTACHMENT F: Building Renderings
ATTACHMENT G: Landscape Plan and Details
ATTACHMENT H: Schedule D – Amenity Requirements for Additional Density
ATTACHMENT I: Student Housing Parking Areas
ATTACHMENT J: Aerial Photo

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