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DATE OF MEETING [July 26, 2021]

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**SUBJECT [DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP1198  
– 361 ALBERT STREET]**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present for Council's consideration, a development permit application for a five-storey building with 22 residential units and a live/work studio at 361 Albert Street.

### **Recommendation**

That Council issue Development Permit No. 1198 at 361 Albert Street with one variance to increase the maximum allowable building height from 11.2m to 14.0m.

## **BACKGROUND**

A development permit application, DP1198, was received from Douglas R. Johnson Architect Ltd. on behalf of Gagan Sharma for a five-storey building with 22 residential units and a live/work studio to be located at 361 Albert Street.

### **Subject Property and Site Context**

<i>Zoning</i>	DT9 Old City Central
<i>Location</i>	The subject property is located in the downtown area on the east end of Albert Street between Cavan Street and Roberts Street.
<i>Total Area</i>	0.1ha
<i>Official Community Plan (OCP)</i>	Map 1 – Future Land Use Plan - Neighbourhood Map 3 – Development Permit Area No. 9 - Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, Multiple Family and Mixed Commercial/Residential development; and Development Permit Area No. 8 – Old City Neighbourhood
<i>Old City Neighbourhood Concept Plan</i>	Sub Area 5 - Central Commercial
<i>Relevant Design Guidelines</i>	General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines Nanaimo's Old City Multiple Family Residential Design Guidelines

The subject property is a vacant, sloping site located in the Old City Neighbourhood. The site has a 14m grade change from the northwest corner of the site to the southeast corner. The property is surrounded by a mix of commercial and office uses located on Albert Street, as well as multi-family uses located on Hecate Street.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Proposed Development**

The applicant is proposing a five-storey building with 22 residential units, a live/work studio, and partial underground parking. The subject property is zoned DT9, which permits a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 1.1 when parking spaces are provided fully or partially underground. A FAR of 1.1 is proposed for the development.

<i>Unit Type</i>	<i>Number of Units</i>	<i>Units Sizes</i>
Live/Work studio	1	36m <sup>2</sup>
One bedroom	21	37m <sup>2</sup> – 50m <sup>2</sup>
Two bedroom	1	69m <sup>2</sup>
<i>Total</i>	23 units	

### *Site Design*

The building will front onto Albert Street with a partially underground parking level built into the slope of the land. Street-level pedestrian access is provided to the primary entrance lobby and to the live/work studio on the main level. The driveway access to the parking garage is at the centre of the building. A common outdoor amenity area for residents is proposed on the top of the parking structure at the rear of the property, and is accessed from the second level of the building. Four stepped retaining walls with landscaping are proposed at the rear of the property to provide a gradual transition to the grade changes.

### *Building Design*

The proposed five-storey building will face Albert Street, with four storeys visible from the rear of the parcel. The building is a contemporary design with generous glazing, a flat roof, and balconies for each unit. The exterior façade materials consist of cement panel and horizontal siding. The primary building entrance is accented by a glass canopy with steel supports. The door to the parking garage will be steel frame with frosted glass panels. The parking garage will contain one electric vehicle charger (with rough-in for two additional charging stations), indoor bike storage room with an electrical bike charger, garbage and recycling room, and parking spaces. The upper four storeys consist of residential units with covered outdoor balconies. The proposed design meets the City's design guidelines.

### *Landscape Design*

There is a level pedestrian access from the sidewalk to the primary building entrance, and the front yard area contains a bench, bike rack, and landscaping. The live/work studio can also be accessed from the sidewalk, and generous landscaping screens the outdoor patio space from the public realm. The outdoor amenity area for residents at the rear of the property will contain vegetable garden plots, an outdoor kitchen, play area for children, and plantings. The set of cement retaining walls at the rear will be landscaped with Douglas fir, magnolia trees, various maple trees, and a variety of shrubs and grasses. Concrete steps are located along the south side property line to provide access to the retaining wall landscape areas. At the rear of the property, a railing will be located on the retaining wall along the side and rear property lines. Exterior lighting will be provided at building entrances and within the amenity area.

## Design Advisory Panel

The Design Advisory Panel (DAP), at its meeting held on 2020-SEP-10, accepted DP001198 as presented with support for the proposed variance. The following recommendations were provided:

- Consider the incorporation of Staff comments, particularly with respect to the side elevations.
- Consider the roof material and colour selection to respect the significant overlook by neighbouring properties.
- Consider reducing the parkade length and number of parking stalls to allow for a stepped retaining wall at the rear of the property.

The applicant responded to the DAP recommendations by improving the visual interest on the side elevations of the building with the addition of a pattern of coloured panels in complementary colours. A pattern of artificial grass is proposed on the roof to provide visual interest with a low-maintenance product. The rear yard area was also improved with the addition of stepped retaining walls to create an attractive environment in the rear yard, and to accommodate the change in elevation.

## Proposed Variance

### *Building Height*

The maximum allowable building height is 11.2m in the DT9 zone, and the proposed building height is 14.0m; a proposed variance of 2.8m.

The subject property has a significant grade change of approximately 14m from Albert Street to the rear of the property. The surrounding residential properties are at higher elevations, and the grade of the residential properties to the rear are approximately level with the upper storey of the proposed building. The rear façade of the proposed building is a four-storey presentation, and the front façade is a five-storey presentation.

In addition, the proposed building has a reduced footprint and is sited closer to the front lot line in the lowest portion of the property, with an amenity area and landscaped area proposed for the rear half of the property. Also, the wall face of the upper storey of the building is recessed to allow for larger balconies, reducing the size of the upper storey. A six-storey office building is located directly across the street at 495 Dunsmuir Street.

Thus, the topography of the neighbourhood, the siting of the building, the reduced building footprint, the recessed upper storey, and the amenity and landscaped area at the rear half of the property all contribute to preserving the public view corridors for the area.

Staff support the proposed variance.

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Development Permit Application No. DP1198 is for a development with 22 residential units and a live/work studio.
- A variance is requested for the building height from 11.2m to 14.0m.
- The proposed development addresses the City's design guidelines, and 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: Aerial Photo

#### **Submitted by:**

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#### **Concurrence by:**

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