

DATE OF MEETING | August 30, 2021 |

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**SUBJECT | DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP1214
– 400 FITZWILLIAM STREET |**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present for Council’s consideration, a development permit application for a mixed-use development at Wallace Street and Wentworth Street.

Recommendation

That Council issue Development Permit No. DP1214 at 400 Fitzwilliam Street with a variance to increase the maximum permitted building height of Building A from 14m to 17m and Building B from 14m to 19m.

BACKGROUND

A development permit application, DP1214, was received from Omicron Architecture Engineering Construction Ltd., on behalf of Telus Communications BC Ltd. to permit a mixed-use rental residential and commercial development.

Subject Property and Site Context

<i>Zoning</i>	DT3 – Wallace
<i>Location</i>	The subject development parcel is bound by Richards Street to the west, Wentworth Street to the north, and Wallace Street to the east.
<i>Total Area</i>	0.71ha (development parcel)
<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>Neighbourhood Plan</i>	Nanaimo Downtown Plan – Wallace
<i>Relevant Design Guidelines</i>	General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines; Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines

The subject property is located in downtown Nanaimo’s Old City Quarter. The site is highly visible near the edge of downtown, and is within walking distance of employment, commercial services, cultural and recreational amenities, and active transportation routes. As part of the City’s ‘Complete Streets’ road standards, an off-street bicycle path will abut the edge of the site on the Wentworth Street and Wallace Street frontages.

The property is currently addressed as 400 Fitzwilliam Street and includes the existing Telus building, which faces Fitzwilliam Street. The remainder of the lot is primarily vacant and includes a surface parking area. There is a concurrent subdivision application to separate the Telus building parcel from the development parcel that will front Wallace Street, Wentworth Street, and Richards Street (see Attachment D, the development parcel is labelled “Proposed Lot 1”). The development parcel slopes gradually downhill from southwest to northeast and is currently supported by low retaining walls facing Wallace Street.

The site is within the Wallace precinct of the Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines that were adopted in 2008. The Wallace precinct is noted for its unique urban geometry and grade change towards Terminal Avenue. The intersection of Wallace and Wentworth Streets is a focal point of identified view corridors.

Surrounding land is a mix of residential and commercial uses, with buildings ranging in height from one to three storeys. Neighbouring properties include multi-family residential buildings across Richards Street to the west, a City-owned parking lot across Wentworth Street to the north, retail and office uses across Wallace Street to the east, and commercial uses along Fitzwilliam Street to the south. A nearby six-storey mixed-use development, the Cardea building, was completed in 2019 and is one block south of the site.

DISCUSSION

Proposed Development

The applicant is proposing to construct a mixed-use development branded as “Telus Living” consisting of one seven-storey building and one six-storey building with a combined total of 197 residential units, one commercial retail unit, and a shared underground parking level.

The proposed unit composition is as follows:

Unit Type <i>(Average Unit Size)</i>	3-Bedroom <i>(101m²)</i>	2-Bedroom <i>(67m²)</i>	1-Bedroom <i>(46m²)</i>	Studio <i>(36m²)</i>	Total
Building A	2	13	21	15	51
Building B	8	32	74	32	146
Total	10	45	95	47	197

The commercial retail unit will have a floor area of 37m². The proposed gross floor area (GFA) of the development is as follows:

Building A	3,970.5m ²
Building B	11,109.0m ²
Total Floor Area	15,079.5m²

The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) will equal 2.26, below the maximum permitted FAR of 2.55 in the DT3 zone

Site Design

The two buildings are oriented to face Wallace Street. The site design takes advantage of a bend in Wallace Street, allowing the development to act as a terminating vista from the north. Building A will be sited on the north portion of the site, next to Wentworth Street. Building B will be L-shaped and is sited through the centre of the site, with frontage along Wallace Street.

A public plaza is proposed to face Wallace Street at its intersection with Wentworth Street. The entrance to the commercial retail unit will be from the plaza. Outdoor amenity spaces on site will include a private courtyard between the two buildings, a dog park and playground for residents on the south side of the site, and a rooftop amenity space on Building B. A walkway will connect around the rear of Building B from Wallace Street.

A shared underground parking level will be accessed via a vehicle ramp from Richards Street below the private courtyard. A smaller surface parking lot behind Building B will also have access from Richards Street and will include visitor parking as well as loading spaces. All required parking will be provided on site with a total of 123 parking spaces. Required bicycle parking will be provided with 100 long-term bicycle parking spaces on the underground parking level and 12 individual bicycle racks provided outside the building entries.

Refuse receptacle rooms are proposed in the underground parking level.

Building Design

The buildings are striking in design with projecting lighter shade volumes at the buildings' bases, and darker recessed façades on the upper floors. The recesses will also break up the horizontal massing of the buildings at intervals. The front entry of Building A will face the intersection of Wallace Street and Wentworth Street. The front entry of Building B will have one entry facing Wallace Street mid-block, and its second entrance facing the surface parking lot. The entrances on Wentworth and Wallace Streets include accessible ramps.

The shared parking level will be masked on the Wallace Street elevation, with residential units to present a six-storey east elevation for Building A and a seven-storey east elevation for Building B. To the west, Buildings A and B will present five- and six-storey elevations, respectively. The south wing of Building B will step down gradually, and its southernmost massing presents a three-storey elevation adjacent to the existing retail buildings at Wallace Street and Fitzwilliam Street.

Building A will include the commercial retail unit on the ground level and a multi-purpose room for residents. A fitness room is proposed on the ground level of Building B in addition to indoor and outdoor amenity space on the uppermost level. All units will include private balconies or patios. The private patios facing Wallace Street will be above grade and separated from the sidewalk by a low retaining wall with metal cable-wire guardrail.

Building materials consist of aluminum composite panels, natural wood-look cementitious siding, and corrugated metal cladding. Exposed concrete will be visible above the commercial retail unit and multi-purpose room for Building A, facing the plaza. The proposed development generally complies with the Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines.

Landscape Design

Landscaping is proposed throughout the site with a planting mix of trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and grasses. The site perimeter will be bound by deciduous trees and a cluster of conifers in the northwest corner of the site. The public plaza will be raised from the sidewalk level and separated by planter beds. Plaza programming includes seating and bollard lighting. A staircase will connect the plaza to the private courtyard and will be flanked by landscaping, decorative boulders, and an art feature. A second public art feature is proposed at the intersection of Richards and Wentworth Streets. Additional public realm improvements will include seating nodes around the periphery of the site. Public street design will be determined as part of the frontage works at the detailed design stage.

The rooftop amenity space will include an outdoor kitchen, seating, lounge furniture, and garden planters for residents.

Design Advisory Panel

The Design Advisory Panel (DAP), at its meeting held on 2021-FEB-11, accepted DP1214 as presented with support for the proposed building height variances and provided the following recommendations:

- Consider enhancing the southeast corner stair and its relationship to the street; and
- Give further consideration to enhancing the integration between the building frontage and the Wallace Street streetscape.

The applicant subsequently revised the site and landscape plans to provide improved access between the public plaza and the sidewalk with additional public realm improvements, including a wall-mounted public bench at the southeast entry staircase.

Proposed Variances

The maximum permitted building height in the DT3 zone is 14m. The proposed building height of Building A is 17m, and the proposed building height of Building B is 19m, requested variances of 3m and 5m respectively.

The building height variances are requested to provide more visual interest with varied rooflines and stepped façades. The applicant has demonstrated the same amount of floor area could be provided without a height variance, but without any articulation to the massing (see Attachment H). By articulating the volumes with taller portions for both buildings, the development's massing can be improved with a break between the two buildings, more open space, a transition of building height to adjacent lots, building setbacks for upper floors, and variations in building appearance.

The subject property is located within the Downtown Urban Node identified by the Official Community Plan, where taller residential buildings are supported. The Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines envisions six-storey building height along Wentworth and Wallace Streets, with setbacks above the fifth storey. Proposed Building A presents a six-storey elevation with an additional setback above the fourth storey. Proposed Building B presents a seven-storey elevation for only a small portion of its street-facing façade and is stepped back above the fifth storey. Additionally, Building B is stepped down to six-, five-, and three-storey elevations as the

building transitions to existing retail buildings to the south, and the additional floor allows the proposed building to present itself as a landmark building when viewed from Wallace Street.

The more compact building form and separation between buildings allows for opportunities for view penetration. Staff support the proposed height variances, given the scale and design of the development.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Development Permit Application No. DP1214 is for a mixed-use development consisting of one seven-storey building and one six-storey building with a combined total of 197 residential units, one commercial retail unit, and a shared underground parking level.
- The applicant is requesting to vary the maximum building height from 14m to 17m for Building A, and from 14m to 19m for Building B.
- Staff support the proposed building height variances.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: Permit Terms and Conditions
ATTACHMENT B: Context Map
ATTACHMENT C: Location Plan
ATTACHMENT D: Subdivision Plan
ATTACHMENT E: Site and Parking Plans
ATTACHMENT F: Building Elevations and Details
ATTACHMENT G: Perspective Views
ATTACHMENT H: Building Massing
ATTACHMENT I: Shadow Study
ATTACHMENT J: Landscape Plan and Details
ATTACHMENT K: Aerial Photo

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