

STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP001256 – 77 CHAPEL STREET

Applicant: PRIMEX INVESTMENTS LTD.

Owner: 6557 NANAIMO HOLDINGS LTD.

Architect: DHK ARCHITECTS INC.

Landscape Architect: MURDOCK DE GREEF INC.

SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SITE CONTEXT

<i>Zoning</i>	Chapel Front (DT5)
<i>Location</i>	The subject property is bounded by Skinner Street to the west and Chapel Street to the east.
<i>Total Area</i>	0.42ha
<i>Official Community Plan (OCP)</i>	Map 1 – Future Land Use Plan – Urban Node 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 Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines

The subject property is located at a prominent site in the Chapel Front precinct of Downtown Nanaimo, located between Skinner Street and Chapel Street. The property is triangular in shape and currently contains a parkade structure. A previous development permit, DP1117, for a 24-storey mixed-use building with 109 dwelling units and commercial space was approved for the property in 2019. The development permit subsequently expired and the property has since been sold. The site slopes downhill significantly from northeast to southwest.

The surrounding neighbourhood contains a mix of uses including a 24-unit mixed-use building at 10 Chapel Street to the north (completed in 2016), the Nanaimo Law Courts and offices across Chapel Street to the east, a 61-unit multi-family building at 91 Chapel Street to the south (completed in 2020), a parking lot and offices across Skinner Street to the southwest, and restaurants and residences across Skinner Street to the northwest. A number of other commercial services and amenities are available within walking distance, and Commercial Street is approximately 100m south of the subject property.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is proposing to construct three 6-storey residential buildings with a combined total of 154 dwelling units. The north building is proposed to be a rental residential building, and the two south buildings are proposed to be strata condominium buildings.

The proposed unit composition is as follows:

<i>Unit Type</i> (Average Unit Size)	3-Bed (109m ²)	2-Bed (91m ²)	1-Bed (58m ²)	Studio (41m ²)	Total
Rental Building	-	21	51	12	84
Strata Building (“Benson View”)	-	14	12	-	26
Strata Building (“Harbour View”)	2	8	34	-	44
Total	2	43	97	12	154

The proposed total gross floor area is 11,703m² and the total Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is 2.78, below the maximum permitted FAR of 4.25 under the site-specific DT5 zone. The building floor area breakdown is as follows:

- Rental Building (north) – 6,145m²
- Strata Building (“Benson View”, southwest) – 3,457m²
- Strata Building (“Harbour View”, southeast) – 2,101m²

Site Design

The proposed buildings will be sited parallel to adjacent streets, with the rental building in the north portion of the lot facing Chapel Street and offset from the street alignment, one strata building (“Harbour View”) in the southeast portion of the lot facing Chapel Street, and the second strata building (“Benson View”) facing Skinner Street. An underground parking structure will be shared between all buildings. The two strata buildings will be separate by an internal private courtyard but will be connected by a storage/amenity space and elevated exterior walkways on every floor. A public plaza is proposed to the south of the rental building’s principal entry, facing Chapel Street. A gate for private access will separate the internal courtyard from the public plaza, and a private staircase will connect the internal courtyard with Skinner Street. A public art component will be incorporated into the site design, either at the north corner of the property or on the exterior wall of one of the buildings.

Vehicle access to the underground parking is proposed from Skinner Street. A total of 155 parking stalls are proposed across three parking levels, greater than the 95 parking stalls that would be required by the City’s “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266”. All required bicycle parking is proposed on-site. A garbage/recycling room will open out to a loading zone adjacent to the parking entrance on Skinner Street.

Staff Comments:

- Ensure that the proposed public art is highly visible and accessible from the public realm.
- Review opportunities to provide a more open and direct private pedestrian connection between the internal courtyard and Skinner Street.
- Reconsider the use of a gate between the public plaza and private courtyard, and consider options to delineate the public realm through site design.

Building Design

The building design reflects the development’s residential use and there is a strong balance of materials on all three buildings with a distinctive base and upper levels. The massing of the strata buildings will continue the massing established by 91 Chapel Street to the south. Two-storey townhouse units are proposed on the west side of the strata building facing Skinner Street that will mask the southern portion of the parking structure. The massing, form, and character of the rental building will complement the strata buildings. Private rooftop patios are proposed on the strata buildings, and a common rooftop amenity space is proposed on the rental building. All units will include either a deck or patio.

The exterior building materials will include mix of fibre-cement panel siding and wood-like metal siding, grounded by a brick veneer at the base of the buildings. Wood-like metal soffits are proposed for the uppermost overhangs, and balconies will have aluminum guardrails. The exposed exterior of the parking levels below the rental building will be cast-in-place concrete.

Staff Comments:

- Explore opportunities to incorporate a landmark design component into the north elevation of the rental building to highlight the distinctive nature of the lot and the visible prominence of the site at the north edge of Downtown Nanaimo. (Section C.3 of the “Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines” recommends a landmark building with a minimum 6 storeys at this location.)
- Consider ways to break up the continuous massing of the development further and preserve a view corridor between the buildings (e.g. when viewing Downtown from the Old City Quarter or viewing Mount Benson from the east).
- Incorporate more prominent front entries for both buildings facing Chapel Street.
- Look at emphasizing the relationship between the buildings and the public plaza, for example by orienting ground-level units in the strata building towards the plaza.
- Strengthen the connection of the rental building to Skinner Street on the west elevation, for example through a continuation of residential units or with exterior cladding and finishes on the parkade wall.
- Explore ways to better relate the south elevation of the rental building to the internal courtyard (e.g. with balconies, stepped massing, etc.).
- Consider consistent glass balcony railings for all buildings to better integrate with 91 Chapel Street and adjacent developments.
- Ensure adequate screening of rooftop equipment and consider a decorative rooftop treatment to address overlook from nearby taller buildings.

Landscape Design

The landscape design reflects the urban nature of the development with a number of plaza features, seating areas, and terraced rain gardens incorporated throughout the site. The internal courtyard will include a synthetic lawn with lounge seating and a maple tree. The public plaza facing Chapel Street will include tree and shrub plantings as well as wood bench seating. A pathway is proposed to cross the north corner of the site at the intersection of Skinner and Chapel Street, and a metal arbour feature is proposed to face the sidewalk at the intersection. A landscape buffer with maple trees will continue along the west edge of the site abutting Skinner Street. A green wall is proposed on the exterior of the parkade wall on the west side of the rental building.

Staff Comments:

- With the unique geometry offered by the intersection at the north corner of the site, explore opportunities to develop a comprehensive amenity space at this location (e.g. by widening the pathway, expanding the seating options, etc.).
- Consider expanding the rooftop amenity area and programming for the rental building, and incorporating landscaping elements.
- Consider site lighting elements and ensure adequate lighting for exterior walkways.

PROPOSED VARIANCES

Projections Into Yards

The minimum front yard setback for an underground parking structure is 1.8m. The proposed parking structure setback from Chapel Street is 0.0m, a requested variance of 1.8m.