

STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP001309 – 231 FRASER STREET

Applicant / Architect: IAN NIAMATH ARCHITECT

Owner: MIKE MARNET

Landscape Architect: 4 SITE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND SITE PLANNING

SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SITE CONTEXT

<i>Zoning</i>	Wallace (DT3)
<i>Location</i>	The subject property is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Fraser Street and Wentworth Street.
<i>Total Area</i>	809m ²
<i>City Plan (OCP)</i>	Future Land Use Designation: Primary Urban Centre - Downtown Development Permit Area: Form and Character DPA8
<i>Relevant Design Guidelines</i>	General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines; and Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines

The subject property is located in Downtown Nanaimo between the Old City Quarter and historic core, in an area known informally as the “Terminal Trench” due to its location in a valley occupied by Terminal Avenue. The lot contains a gravel parking lot but is otherwise vacant. The rear portion of the lot, in the west, is steeply sloping uphill towards Wallace Street.

The surrounding neighbourhood is a mix of commercial uses including automotive repair uses to the east and south that have been historically prevalent in this part of Nanaimo. Other nearby uses include retail services, offices, and a restaurant across Wentworth Street to the north.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development is a one-storey automotive leasing/sales service and office building with a surface parking lot. The proposed gross floor area is 96m² and the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) will be 0.12, less than the maximum permitted FAR of 2.55 in the DT3 zone. The applicant intends for the proposed development to be an interim use for the site until a more significant long-term development plan can be developed in concert with other nearby sites.

Site Design

The proposed building is sited in the northeast portion of the property close to the intersection, and much of the remainder of the site will be utilized by a surface parking lot to support the proposed use. A total of 14 parking stalls are proposed, of which 3 are required parking stalls (for customers or employees) and 11 are proposed for the storage and display of vehicles. Vehicle access to the parking lot will be from Fraser Street through a sliding gate. The property will be secured by fence and the sloping rear of the property will include a lock block retaining wall behind the parking lot.

Staff Comments:

- Look at opportunities for a direct pedestrian connection to the site from the adjacent streets.
- Confirm the fence type as an aluminum picket fence (as suggested in the Letter of Rationale) rather than a chainlink fence (as shown on the Site Plan).
- Confirm lock block retaining wall height and material details, and consider textured blocks.
- Explore site lighting options for surface parking area.

Building Design

The proposed building is a small structure that will include floor space for offices and a vehicle detailing garage. The building design includes significant design details meant to address relevant Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines, with key elements including: vertical wall cladding with LED strips incorporated into the siding facing the street intersection, a prominent vehicle entry arch tied to the building design, and clerestory windows above the garage. The exterior building materials will consist of stucco panels and aluminum siding.

Staff Comments:

- Consider additional glazing or other visual interest on the north (Wentworth Street) elevation.
- Look at incorporating a designated pedestrian entry for staff and customers, with weather protection.

Landscape Design

Landscaping is proposed along both street frontages, with a 3m landscape buffer between the building and adjacent property lines. A mix of shrubs, groundcovers, and decorative river rock with boulders are proposed in the plant beds, in addition to two flowering trees along the Fraser Street frontage. A raingarden is also proposed within the landscape buffer close to the street intersection. Existing trees along the slope to the rear will be retained, with hydroseeding for wildflowers and native grasses throughout.

Staff Comments:

- Ensure that the minimum landscape treatment level along Wentworth Street can be met.
- Consider reducing the amount of decorative river rock which may not be suitable in the downtown area, and consider more formal landscape edge along the sidewalk.

PROPOSED VARIANCE

The surface display / storage of vehicles for sale or rental shall not exceed 4 per lot in the DT3 zone. The applicant is proposing a surface parking lot with parking stalls for the display of 11 vehicles for sale or rental, a requested variance of 7 parking stalls.

The applicant is proposing the variance to support the proposed use which is intended to be interim in nature. Much of the surrounding neighbourhood is automobile-centric uses with surface parking, and the subject site is not adjacent to a major road where there would be more of a visual impact.