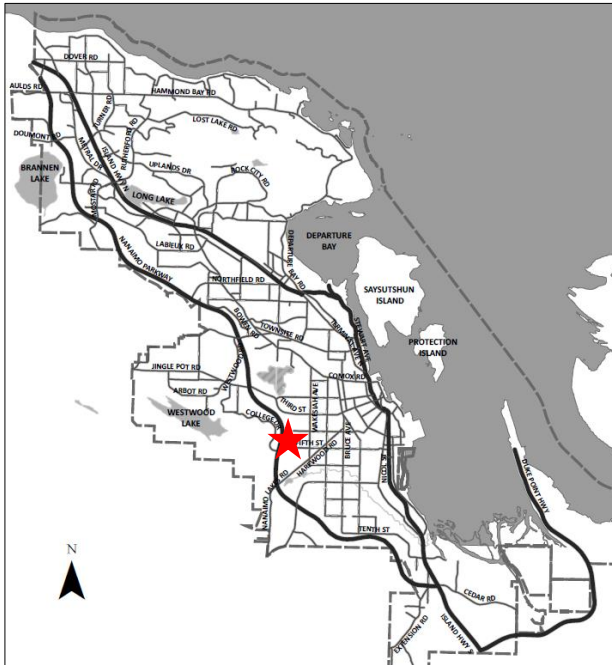


DATE OF MEETING | February 26, 2024 |

AUTHORED BY | PAYTON CARTER, PLANNER, CURRENT PLANNING |

**SUBJECT | DEVELOPMENT VARIANCE PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DVP460 –
900 FIFTH STREET (VANCOUVER ISLAND UNIVERSITY)**



Proposal:

Variations to allow an overheight student housing development and retaining wall



Zoning:

CS1 – Community Service One

City Plan Land Use Designation:

Secondary Urban Centre

Lot Area:

31.9ha



OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present for Council's consideration a development variance permit application to increase the maximum allowable building height for a proposed student housing development and retaining wall at 900 Fifth Street (Vancouver Island University).

Recommendation

That Council issue Development Variance Permit No. DVP460 to allow a student housing development and retaining wall with variances, as outlined in the "Proposed Variances" section of the Staff Report dated 2024-FEB-26.

BACKGROUND

A development variance permit application, DVP460, was received from Turner & Townsend, on behalf of Vancouver Island University, to vary the provisions of the "City of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500" (the Zoning Bylaw) to increase the maximum allowable height for a proposed student housing building and retaining wall at 900 Fifth Street.

Subject Property and Site Context

The subject property is bordered by Third Street to the north and Fifth Street to the south. The Nanaimo Parkway is located to the west and overlooks the subject property. Fourth Street abuts the lot and transitions to University Crescent, which is entirely internal to the site. The property slopes upward significantly (75m) from east to west and is the existing location of Vancouver Island University.

The surrounding neighbourhood includes the Serauxmen Stadium, the Rotary Bowl, Q'unq'inuqstuxw Stadium, and Nanaimo District Secondary School located to the northeast. The Harewood Neighbourhood is located across Wakesiah Avenue with primarily single family dwellings and across Fifth Street is a large parcel of land. The College Park neighbourhood is located across the Nanaimo Parkway and includes primarily single family dwellings.

Statutory Notification has taken place prior to Council's consideration of the variances.

DISCUSSION

Proposed Development

The applicant proposes to construct a new ten-storey student housing building on campus, adjacent to existing student housing buildings and an outdoor sports court. The new building will be accessed from an extension of University Crescent. It is expected that the building will be comprised of a three-storey concrete podium and a seven-storey mass timber structure, which will include 266 student beds with shared lounges on each residential floor, student support space, amenity areas, and food services.

Primary building access is located at grade and provides an accessible arrival area for students and staff requiring access to building support services, the mechanical room and facility storage. The second storey includes the dining and food services, intended to serve building residents. This area will include seating for 200 individuals, a commercial kitchen and a servery. The third level is intended for student housing support, including laundry services, meeting rooms, staff offices, and study space. The remaining six levels will contain student housing units with a range of private, semi-private, and accessible suites. The residential storeys will also include a central floor lounge. It is anticipated that the project will achieve Step 4 of the BC Energy Step Code.

To support the new development, additional improvements to adjacent parking and landscaped areas are proposed including raingardens, tree planting, outdoor seating, amenity space, and pathway lighting. The parking area will include landscape islands, increased accessible parking spaces, and delineated pedestrian crossings.

Proposed Variances

Building Height Variance

The maximum permitted height for a principal building in the CS1 zone is 14m. The proposed height for a principal building is 33m, a requested variance of 19m.

Staff support the proposed variance as it would facilitate a necessary student housing development for Vancouver Island University, complete with student services and shared amenities. The compact building form facilitates onsite improvements, including the planting of robust landscaping, the addition of outdoor seating, and improved pedestrian circulation. The proposed development site lies outside of the Nanaimo Parkway Character Protection Zone and the Tree Protection Zone and will not negatively impact view corridors from the Parkway, as shown on Attachment H. The proposed building is not anticipated to negatively impact the views of properties located up slope from the Nanaimo Parkway, as the new building is well below the grade of the Parkway.

The proposed height variance would allow a building form that aligns with City Plan policy, which encourages high density residential development and a mix of uses to recognize this urban centre as a focal point for post-secondary education with higher density residential uses, and to support Vancouver Island University's plans for expanded student housing.

Retaining Wall Height Variance

The maximum permitted height for a retaining wall located outside the required setbacks of the CS1 zone is 3.0m. The proposed retaining wall located adjacent to the outdoor amenity space is 4.25m, a requested variance of 1.25m

Staff support the proposed retaining wall variance as it provides an accessible entrance to the second storey of the proposed student housing development. The retaining wall is painted concrete with a decorative design and partially screened by climbing vines, wood and concrete outdoor seating, and raised planters.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Development Variance Permit No. DVP460 is an application to:
 - Increase the maximum allowable height for a principal building in the CS1 zone from 14m to 33m to facilitate a student housing development; and,
 - Increase the maximum allowable height of a retaining wall outside the required setback in the CS1 zone from 3.0m to 4.25m at Vancouver Island University.
- The proposed compact building form is supported by City Plan.
- Staff support the proposed variance. |

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A: Permit Terms and Conditions
ATTACHMENT B: Subject Property Map
ATTACHMENT C: Site Plan
ATTACHMENT D: Height Survey
ATTACHMENT E: Proposed Building Elevations
ATTACHMENT F: Proposed Building Rendering
ATTACHMENT G: Proposed Retaining Wall Elevations
ATTACHMENT H: View Analysis |

Submitted by:

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