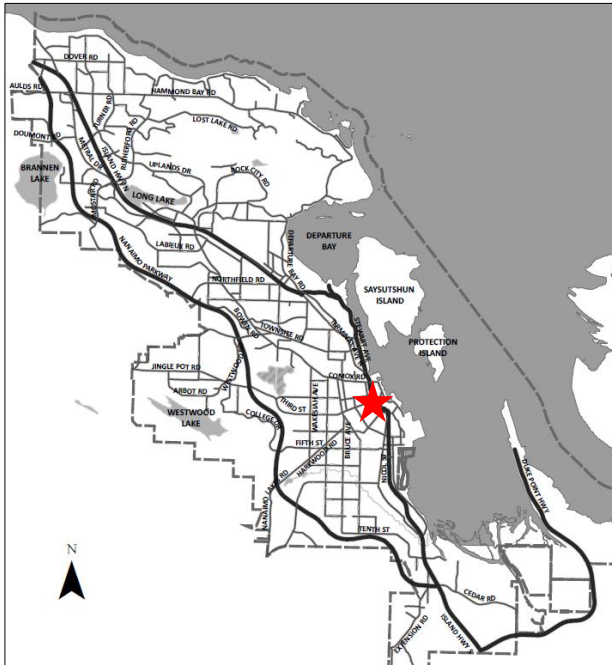


DATE OF MEETING | March 4, 2024 |

AUTHORED BY | CALEB HORN, PLANNER, CURRENT PLANNING |

**SUBJECT** | **DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP1289 –  
337 ROBSON STREET**



**Proposal:**

A 31-unit multi-family residential development

**Zoning:**

DT2 – Fitzwilliam

**City Plan Land Use Designation:**

Primary Urban Centre

**Development Permit Areas:**

DPA8 – Form & Character

**Lot Area:**

498m<sup>2</sup>

**DP**



## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present for Council's consideration a development permit application for a multi-family residential development at 337 Robson Street.

### **Recommendation**

That Council issue Development Permit No. DP1289 for a multi-family residential development at 337 Robson Street with variances as outlined in the "Proposed Variances" section of the Staff Report dated 2024-MAR-04.

## **BACKGROUND**

A development permit application, DP1289, was received from Beck Vale Architects and Planners Inc., on behalf of 1362132 BC Ltd., to permit a five-storey multi-family residential development with 31 dwelling units at 337 Robson Street. A previous development permit for the property, DP1127, was approved in 2019 and expired in 2021.

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

The subject property is located in the Old City Quarter at the western edge of Downtown Nanaimo. Robson Street is a cul-de-sac extending from Franklyn Street with a pedestrian connection to Fitzwilliam Street to the north. The property contains a private gravel parking lot, and no trees or other significant vegetation are present on the lot.

The surrounding neighbourhood includes a mix of commercial and residential land uses. Adjacent properties include St. Andrew's United Church to the north, offices across Robson Street to the east, surface parking lots and future development sites along Robson Street to the south, and a mix of commercial uses (retail stores, restaurants, and offices) along Wesley Street to the west. A number of amenities are located nearby with commercial services on Fitzwilliam Street, Victoria Crescent, and Commercial Street. Nearby recent residential developments include the 46-unit five-storey Cardea building at 238 Franklyn Street (completed 2019) and the 195-unit six-storey Telus Living development at 235 Wallace Street (under construction).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Proposed Development**

The proposed development is a five-storey multi-family residential building with 31 studio rental units and under-the-building parking. The proposed units are micro-units with sizes ranging from 30m<sup>2</sup> to 34m<sup>2</sup>.

The proposed gross floor area is 1,233m<sup>2</sup> and the total Floor Area Ratio (FAR) will be 2.48, which is below the maximum permitted FAR of 2.50 for this development. The base maximum FAR in the DT2 zone is 2.30 and the applicant is proposing to achieve an additional 0.20 FAR through the provision of amenities as outlined in 'Schedule D – Amenity Requirements for Additional

Density’ of the “City of Nanaimo Zoning Bylaw 2011 No. 4500”. The applicant is proposing to meet Tier 1 in Schedule D by providing amenities including the following:

- Wood frame construction;
- The use of recycled building materials;
- Exceeding the BC Energy Step Code by one step;
- Low-flow plumbing features;
- Rainwater collection for on-site irrigation; and,
- Educational signage for sustainable building materials, energy management practices, and water management practices.

### *Site Design*

The proposed building covers the entire site with 100% lot coverage as permitted in the DT2 zone. Access to the under-the-building parking will be provided from Robson Street via a drive aisle located in the centre of the property. A portion of the building footprint is set back from Robson Street to accommodate the parking entrance and short-term bicycle parking. The pedestrian entrance is located on Robson Street at the northeast corner of the building.

A total of 11 vehicle parking spaces are proposed onsite (see “Proposed Variances” section of this report), in addition to the required 16 long-term bicycle parking spaces and four short-term bicycle parking spaces. Waste collection will be from a garbage room in the parking level.

### *Building Design*

The relevant design guidelines are the Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines (the “Downtown Design Guidelines”) which encourages residential uses along Robson Street. The front façade of the five-storey building includes a two-column element at zero lot line, with wood-like cladding framing the corners of the building. The remainder of the front façade is set back from the street in order to break up the massing of the building and allow for underground parking access. Exterior materials will include a mix of cementitious panels.

The Downtown Design Guidelines encourage a 1.5m setback from Robson Street; and the central portion of the upper storey is set back slightly further (approximately 2m) to allow an open deck and articulation of the building. Balconies on each level add visual interest to the building. The front entrance is defined by an overhead deck and prominent glazing. The front elevation emphasizes a street wall character while maintaining a human scale of development.

The rear elevation includes a more pronounced terraced design where the parking level is partially underground. The second floor of the building is set back approximately 3m and the uppermost floor is set back an additional 10m. By stepping back the building, the applicant is able to provide rooftop outdoor amenity space and transition to the existing two-storey office building to the rear. The proposed development is in substantial compliance with the applicable Downtown Design Guidelines.

### *Landscape Design*

The 100% lot coverage allows for limited landscaping opportunities. The applicant is proposing ornamental planting to screen the pad-mounted transformer at street level in addition to a raised planter adjacent to the sidewalk. Additional planter beds are proposed on second-level private

patios and the fifth-level rooftop terrace. Garden beds for residents are also proposed in the rooftop amenity space.

### **Design Advisory Panel**

The application was not referred to the Design Advisory Panel (DAP) as the design is in substantial compliance with the design of DP1127 that was previously accepted by DAP in 2019.

### **Proposed Variances**

#### *Maximum Building Height*

The maximum permitted height for a principal building in the DT2 zone is 12.0m and the proposed building height is 16.1m, a requested variance of 4.1m. The variance request is consistent with the previously approved DP.

The height variance is requested in order to accommodate the uppermost floor and to maximize outdoor amenity space onsite with rooftop amenities. The fifth level only covers a portion of the building and the massing is concentrated towards the Robson Street elevation. The development will not impact a public view corridor as identified in the Downtown Urban Design Plan and Guidelines. The proposed building elevation will be similar to that of St. Andrew's United Church to the north.

City Plan supports taller building heights in the Downtown Urban Centre, with typical building forms including a mix of low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise buildings.

#### *Minimum Required Parking*

The minimum required parking for the development is 14 parking spaces and the total number of spaces accounted for is 12, a requested variance of two spaces.

While only 11 parking spaces are provided onsite, the City of Nanaimo "Off Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266" (the "Parking Bylaw") allows cash-in-lieu for up to 10% of the required parking in this area. The applicant is proposing to pay cash-in-lieu for one parking space and is requesting a variance for the remaining two spaces.

The applicant intends to cater the rental development towards those who do not have private vehicles as a principal mode of transport. The site is located in close proximity to services and transit, with a bus stop on Fitzwilliam Street approximately 100m northwest (identified as Bus Frequent Transit by City Plan) and the future transit exchange approximately 400m southeast. The site is less than 100m away from Wallace Street which is identified as a future Secondary Active Mobility Route by City Plan. Additionally, City Plan encourages alternative mobility modes and development in close proximity to services where there is less reliance on a private vehicle, and further supports the removal of minimum parking requirements in the Downtown Urban Centre.

Staff support the proposed variances. |

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Development Permit Application No. DP1289 is for a five-storey multi-family residential development with 31 dwelling units at 337 Robson Street.
- The proposed development is in substantial compliance with the applicable Downtown Design Guidelines.
- Variances are requested to increase the maximum permitted building height from 12.0m to 16.1m and to reduce the minimum required parking from 14 spaces to 12.
- Staff support the proposed variances.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

ATTACHMENT A: Permit Terms and Conditions  
ATTACHMENT B: Subject Property Map  
ATTACHMENT C: Site and Parking Plans  
ATTACHMENT D: Building Elevations and Details  
ATTACHMENT E: Building Renderings  
ATTACHMENT F: Landscape Plan and Details  
ATTACHMENT G: Schedule D – Amenity Requirements for Additional Density

#### **Submitted by:**

Lainya Rowett  
Manager, Current Planning

#### **Concurrence by:**

Jeremy Holm  
Director, Planning & Development