STAFF DESIGN COMMENT

DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION NO. DP001361
564 FIFTH STREET & 502 HOWARD AVENUE

Applicant: POONI GROUP

Architect: FORMLINE ARCHITECTURE + URBANISM

Owner: CITY OF NANAIMO & PROVINCIAL RENTAL HOUSING CORPORATION (BC HOUSING)

Landscape Architect: LADR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS.

SUBJECT PROPERTY AND SITE CONTEXT

Zoning (proposed)	Comprehensive Development Zone (concurrent RA493)
Location	The subject property is located on the north side of Fifth Street between Georgia Avenue and Howard Avenue.
Total Area	Parcel B (502 Howard Avenue): 0.885 ha Parcel C (564 Fifth Street): 0.947 ha
City Plan (OCP) (proposed)	Future Land Use Designation: Mixed-Use Corridor (concurrent OCP103) Development Permit Area DPA8 – Form and Character
Relevant Design Guidelines	General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines + Harewood Neighbourhood Plan

In 2019, the City of Nanaimo, BC Housing, School District No. 68, and Snuneymuxw First Nation (the Knowledge Partners), established a framework and guiding principles for Te'tuxwtun, a comprehensive land use planning and development project. Through collaboration and community engagement, the Knowledge Partners have developed a shared vision for the development of the lands.

The subject properties are two large lots located in the Harewood neighbourhood, just west of the University Village Mall. The grade change across the properties is approximately 8m, sloping down to the west. Established single residential dwellings, multi-family developments, a school, and a neighbourhood commercial centre predominantly characterize the surrounding area with Vancouver Island University to the west, and Downtown Nanaimo to the northeast.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is proposing to construct a comprehensively planned mixed-use development, a land and community enhancement project incorporating housing, services, education, outdoor spaces, and amenities. The development consists of three 6-storey multi-family rental apartment buildings and a single-storey 1,605m^2 community building (Building 4). Building 2 includes 205m^2 of ground floor commercial gross floor area and 9 live/work units. The total gross floor area of the development is 31,825m^2 and the proposed total Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is 1.32 for Parcel B and 2.21 for Parcel C.

The proposed unit composition is as follows:

Unit Type	No. of Units (Building 1)	No. of Units (Building 2)	No. of Units (Building 3)	Floor Area
Studio	18	22	50	39m^2 – 48m^2
1-Bedroom	37	23	22	56m^2 – 58m^2
2-Bedroom	37	21	19	81m^2 – 87m^2
3-Bedroom	34	22	21	65m^2 – 108m^2
4-Bedroom	6	5	12	80m^2 – 125m^2
Live-Work	0	9	0	58m^2 – 115m^2
		Total:	358 Units	

Site Design

The proposed buildings are rectilinear and arranged around a central gathering area, reflective of a traditional longhouse form. The development has been designed based on the project's guiding principles of indigeneity, equity, accessibility, sustainability, resiliency, community, and culture. Building 1 fronts on Georgia Avenue; Building 2 fronts on Fifth Street and Georgia Avenue; Building 3 fronts on Howard Avenue; and Building 4 (community building) fronts on Fifth Street and Howard Avenue. All four buildings surround an interior central amenity space which incorporates landscaping, public and private open space with programming, and a robust pedestrian network connecting to onsite and offsite destinations that crosses east to west and north to south. Vehicle parking consists of 339 underground parking spaces accessed from Georgia Avenue. Long-term bicycle storage (464 spaces) will be located within secure rooms accessed from the underground parking lot or at grade. Forty (40) short-term bicycle parking spaces are required, with bike racks proposed throughout the site. Three-stream waste management containers are located in garbage rooms in each building.

Staff Comments:

- Large blocks of open spaces, programming, and natural supervision is provided in accordance with the General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines.
- Consider providing dedicated long-term bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities for employees of the commercial and community spaces.
- Locate short-term bicycle racks closer to the main entrance of the community building and consider incorporating additional short-term bicycle parking spaces for event parking.

Building Design

Buildings 1, 2, and 3 are inspired by a contemporary longhouse design aesthetic with flat roofs and natural exterior finishes such as wood and stone tile as well as contemporary materials including fibre cement, steel, as well as curtain wall glazing (Building 2) to highlight the commercial uses. All ground floor residential and live-work units incorporate a patio and connection to the street or the central publicly accessible amenity area, with private balconies for upper floor units that incorporate metal wood-look louvres for sun protection and privacy.

Building 4 (community building) is a single storey community building in a longhouse building form with a sloped roof that steps down with the grade of the site. The exterior finishes of the building include a mix of glulam post and beam, cedar siding, and curtain wall glazing. A large roof overhang extends from the front of the building, providing a large covered open area for community gatherings.

Staff Comments:

- Connections for ground level residential units to the street or central public areas, buildings stepped with grade, underground parking, rooftop amenity areas, continuous glazing for commercial uses, and screening of mechanical equipment are provided in accordance with the General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines.
- Building 4 has a façade and grand entrance design which distinguishes the community use and harmonizes it with the adjacent residential uses in accordance with the General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines and is designed to consider local events/community uses in accordance with the Harewood Neighbourhood Plan.
- Consider additional opportunities to emphasize the common residential entrances for wayfinding.
- Consider opportunities to increase visual interest and create an engaging interface with the public realm where large expanses of stone tile are used.
- Consider opportunities for some variation for the louvres to reduce repetition and individualize the buildings.

Landscape Design

The proposed development includes various native deciduous and coniferous trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, ferns, groundcovers, and vines which include food producing and pollinator supporting species. Common outdoor amenity areas for residents include rooftop community gardens, covered seating, and outdoor kitchens on Buildings 1, 2, and 3 as well as a private outdoor amenity spaces for residents on the ground level with benches, seating, a wood deck and lawn which is separated from the public space by a planted berm. The public amenity area incorporates various programmed and naturalized spaces including a pedestrian trail network, covered pavilion, plazas, terraced lawns, stormwater feature, seating, a play area, a basketball court, and a fire pit. Private fenced amenity areas are provided for the intended daycares in Building 4. A variety of hardscaping will be incorporated throughout the site including concrete pathways, paved plazas, concrete retaining walls, boulders, stormwater runnels, and raised exterior decks. Four house poles will be located at the corners of the site and will be integrated into the building architecture where possible.

Staff Comments:

- Roof top decks that maximize views to Te'tuxwtun (Mount Benson) and berms (instead of fencing) has been incorporated into the design in accordance with the General Development Permit Area Design Guidelines.
- Provide pedestrian scale lighting along the pathways and throughout the site, ensuring no spillage into the units or adjacent properties.
- Consider adding gateway elements to highlight the public pathways entrances from the street.
- Consider retaining wall materials or textures that complement the natural building materials or cascading plants or vegetative screening.

PROPOSED VARIANCES

Building Height

The maximum height of a principal building with a flat roof in the proposed CD zone is 20m. The applicant is proposing a height of 20.58m for Building 1 and 20.67m for Building 2, with requested variances of 0.58m and 0.67m respectively.

Off-Street Parking

The required number of parking spaces is 582. The applicant is proposing 339 parking spaces, a requested variance of 243 parking spaces.

The required number of loading spaces is 2. The applicant is proposing 0 loading spaces, a requested variance of 2 parking spaces.