

Introduction

Background

This application is in support of a proposal to rezone the site at 349 W Georgia St, the former Main Post Office building. The proposed CD-1 zoning would allow both an increase in density from 7 to 12.08 FSR and a mix of uses, including parking, above and below grade retail, office, rental residential, and condominium residential.

The site is strategically located at what is currently a gateway location to the downtown core in the Crosstown neighbourhood. This redevelopment will provide an essential link and catalyst between the established residential neighbourhoods of Yaletown and the transitioning Gastown / Chinatown area.

The neighbouring context of the site is comprised of a mix of uses. Major institutional and educational buildings dominate to the south and east, the Vancouver Public Library and Queen Elizabeth Theatre among these. Immediately to the north and west are major office developments.

Linkages to transit are excellent with close proximity to SkyTrain via stadium station and bus transit surrounding the site. Discussion on the future of the viaduct access routes on Dunsmuir and Georgia is ongoing.

The site, approximately 130,092sf (12,086m²) in area, is currently zoned DD area C1 with a density of 7 FSR and a height limit of 150ft (45.7m) (Development Permit Board may

increase the basic maximum height to 450.1ft [137.2m]). View corridors restrict height to approximately 222ft (67.7) with exceptions at the corners.

The site is currently occupied by the former Main Post Office building, a significant landmark. Retention of almost all of the structure is proposed. Additional area and new uses are superimposed within height and view limits to create a mix of uses that contribute to and repair the neighbourhood's urban fabric, in alignment with applicable policy.

The Proposal

The proposal to rezone 349 W Georgia St from Downtown District to CD-1 zoning, is required to accommodate:

- A change in use to a mix of uses. Residential use is added to the uses allowed under the current zoning.
- A change in height from the permitted height of 150ft (45.7m) to approximately 222ft (67.7m).
- A change in density from a permitted density of 7 FSR to the proposed density of 12.08 FSR.

The proposal includes the following components in a comprehensive mixed-use form of development:

- office
- retail
- restaurant
- childcare.
- rental residential
- condominium residential
- parking + loading

A number of significant public benefits are envisaged as part of this proposal:

- The largest heritage revitalization in Vancouver history.
- Goal of achieving project carbon neutrality
- LEED Gold ND for the project
- LEED Platinum office building
- On-site public open space fronting W Georgia St, providing animation and pedestrian seating opportunities
- Improvements to all four street façades to create attractive, inviting and animated streetscape
- On-site childcare
- A positive market impact on housing affordability through on-site rental housing
- A provision of a significant amount of high quality job space close to transit

The proposed development will meet or exceed all applicable City Policies and Guidelines including the Downtown District Official Development Plan, the Downtown Design Guidelines, the Downtown District Character Area Description for Georgia St, the Central Business District Policies for Residential Zoning, Metro Core Jobs and Economy Land Use Plan, Rental 100 Policy, Rezoning Policy for CBD and CBD shoulder, Central Area Pedestrian Weather Protection, View Protection Guidelines, Heritage Policies, the Community Amenity Contribution Policy, Public Art Policy and Sustainable Large Sites Policy.

1.1 Introduction

Initial Urban Design Panel Review

The initial proposal was conceived as an adaptive re use of the original Main Post Office heritage structure containing retail, restaurant, office, residential and parking uses, with office and residential elements and open space constructed above the heritage podium.

A new plaza replaces the existing vehicular forecourt and all four street facades are animated with uses that significantly enhance this vacant urban block.

At the initial review by Urban Design Panel of February 8, 2017, this proposal was not supported and a number of key aspects needing further consideration were identified.

List of UDP Items:

- Design development to reduce the building mass
- Design development to better daylight the building spaces
- Design development to better relate the rhythm of the top additions to the post-office
- Consider animating the abrupt straight Georgia façade with something other than offices
- Consider a different form on Georgia above the post office
- There is room for more diversity within the architecture and more relationship to the architectural language of the post office
- More passive acknowledgment could be given by the facades with regards to orientation
- Add more public space to this [W Georgia St plaza] terrace area rather than private outdoor café space
- The terraced walls on Hamilton Street are too high
- Consider how the office entrance takes up street space and how this will affect after-hour use
- More animation is needed on the Georgia Street side
- Mitigate after-hour office light pollution in consideration of the building residents
- Design development to better animate Homer Street
- Consider how this building will make a difference in the public realm to create special spaces. Retail is good, but there needs to be less privatized space and more given over to true use by the public
- The current sunlight levels on the site are not ideal for a daycare, so consider ways to increase sun exposure. The garden is currently too shady and will not function as an adequate outdoor amenity for those who reside in the building
- Something should be done with regards to social sustainability. There needs to be something to draw young Vancouverites into this building to live as they are the best way to add animation to the downtown in the long-term
- Provide a much more thought-out plan for public art
- Consider Hamilton Street and location of car and loading access in relation to Queen Elizabeth Plaza
- Provide more connectivity between Homer Street and Hamilton Street

This revised proposal responds to each of these items in a number of ways, summarized below. These revisions result in an overall 11% reduction in massing above the heritage podium and the resultant elimination of 49 rental and 79 condominium units.

Panel's Consensus on Key Aspects Needing Improvement + Responses

Design development to reduce the building mass

- See **1.5 Summary of Changes, 1.6 Massing Response**

- Substantially reduced the building mass above the podium

Design development to better daylight the building spaces

- See **1.5 Summary of Changes, 1.6 Massing Response, and 1.12 Access to Light**

- Substantially reduced the building mass above the podium

- Increased the separation between the condominium residential and office building by 20', increasing the daylight accessibility of the courtyard and rental residential building

- Stepped the office building to increase daylight penetration to the courtyard

Design development to better relate the rhythm of the top additions to the post-office

- See **1.5 Summary of Changes, 1.6 Massing Response and 1.7 Material Expression**

- Re-sculpted the roof line along Homer St and Hamilton St to be more dynamic

- Developed the material and formal expression of the buildings above the podium to establish distinct but complementary identities for the residential and office buildings.

Consider animating the abrupt straight Georgia façade with something other than offices

- See **2.3 Public Space and 2.5 Public Plaza**

- At grade, the W Georgia St facade is animated by a public office lobby and multiple restaurant uses

- The public plaza has been revised to enhance/increase animation

Consider a different form on Georgia above the post office

- See **1.5 Summary of Changes and 1.6 Massing Response**

- The massing and orientation of the office element on W Georgia St has been revised

There is room for more diversity within the architecture and more relationship to the architectural language of the post office

- See **1.7 Material Expression and 1.8 Relationship to Podium**

- An expanded material palette has been proposed

- A stronger formal and material relationship has been developed between the podium and towers above while still being compatible, distinguishable and subordinate to the heritage structure

More passive acknowledgment could be given by the facades with regards to orientation

- See **1.9 Passive Sustainability**

- Passive elements have been added to the south facing elevations of the office including aluminum sunshades and dynamic glass

- Southwest facing green walls have been added to the residential buildings

Add more public space to this [W Georgia St plaza] terrace area rather than private outdoor café space

- See **2.5 Public Plaza**

- Public area on the W Georgia St plaza has been substantially increased

- The plaza design has been developed so that a true public connection is created from Homer St to Hamilton St with the addition of multiple access points, as well as increased public seating opportunities

The terraced walls on Hamilton Street are too high

- See **2.5 Public Plaza**

- The design for the W Georgia St plaza has been developed to reduce the height facing Hamilton St through intermediate landings and a reduced slope

- Greater connectivity through the plaza terraces between Homer St and Hamilton St has been developed

1.2 Response Summary

Consider how the office entrance takes up street space and how this will affect after-hour use

- See **2.3 Public Space**
- The plaza is not exclusively dedicated to the office lobby and offers connected public space the full length of the site along W Georgia St and acts as a connection point between retail and restaurant uses in addition to office

More animation is needed on the Georgia Street side

- See **2.3 Public Space, 2.5 Public Plaza and 3.7 Public Art Opportunities**
- After hours the possibility for animated artwork in the plaza outside the office lobby and on the building face above the lobby on W Georgia St have the potential to animate the street at all times of the day
- The plaza design has been developed to create more opportunities for public interaction and animation from the restaurants or cafes that will face it
- The office roof deck is now proposed to be publicly accessible during office hours, resulting in the lobby becoming an expansion of the public realm with an interior design that will be inviting and encourage informal gathering

Mitigate after-hour office light pollution in consideration of the building residents

- See **1.6 Massing Response and 1.9 Passive Sustainability**
- The separation between the residential buildings and office are in excess of those required by the City of Vancouver
- The separation between the residential and office buildings on Hamilton St has been increased by 20'
- Green walls have been created on the residential building faces adjacent to the office, illustrating that the primary residential views will be into the courtyard or street with limited windows facing the office building
- Energy conservation management policy will ensure the office lights will automatically be turned off after hours

Design development to better animate Homer Street

- See **2.1 Public Realm Strategy, 2.2 Street Faces and 2.3 Public Space**
- The proposed retail space on Homer St is being considered as an extension of the sidewalk, visioned as a European inspired arcade with the impression of smaller or local vendors and spaces for seating and gathering that connect to larger retailers
- There is a ground level public realm strategy to animate all four building faces

Consider how this building will make a difference in the public realm to create special spaces. Retail is good, but there needs to be less privatized space and more given over to true use by the public

- See **2.3 Public Space and 3.2 Community Building**
- Significant contributions to public space have been proposed including a community art gallery and bicycle co-op on Dunsmuir St to tie into existing cultural and cycling infrastructure
- The office roof deck will be publicly accessible creating a significant sun exposed public outdoor space with views of downtown and the mountains

The current sunlight levels on the site are not ideal for a daycare, so consider ways to increase sun exposure. The garden is currently too shady and will not function as an adequate outdoor amenity for those who reside in the building

- See **1.12 Access to Light and 3.1 Child Care**
- The revised massing proposal significantly increases the access to sunlight in both the courtyard and childcare outdoor space
- The childcare orientation has also been adjusted to the south to optimize access to light

Something should be done with regards to social sustainability. There needs to be something to draw young Vancouverites into this building to live as they are the best way to add animation to the downtown in the long-term

- See **2.3 Public Space, 3.2 Community Building, 3.3 Housing and 3.5 Heritage Retention**

- Significant contributions to social sustainability have been proposed including the dedication of a public community gallery and bicycle co op space on Dunsmuir St, a publicly accessible roof deck on the office building, a 49 space childcare facility and the inclusion of diverse housing types including rental and live/work artist studios

-Retention of the heritage structure provides a community amenity by way of preserving a piece of Vancouver's history in addition to a sustainability contribution that will have a positive impact on the immediate community and city as a whole

-The diverse retail and entertainment uses will provide a series of meeting and gathering areas and will become recurring points of contact between neighbors and workers

Provide a much more thought-out plan for public art

- See **3.7 Public Art Opportunities, 3.2 Public Space and 3.2 Community Building**

- A more considered exploration of potential locations for public art has been developed

- A detailed public art plan is not required as part of the City of Vancouver rezoning process, and the project will follow all applicable guidelines and policies related to public art

- While not directly part of the City of Vancouver public art program, the inclusion of live/work artist studios and community gallery contribute to a larger network of arts spaces in the community and respond to its context

Consider Hamilton Street and location of car and loading access in relation to Queen Elizabeth Plaza

- Loading for the current building is in the same location adjacent to Queen Elizabeth Plaza, thus causing the least disturbance to the heritage facade

- Through analysis with Bunt Engineering, and limitations of the existing heritage structure, the loading access is unable to be relocated

- Parking access for the podium parking levels is on Homer St, easing the traffic that will be accessing parking on Hamilton St

-The loading area is primarily used in the early morning or during business hours whereas activity at Queen Elizabeth theater typically occurs during evenings and weekends

Provide more connectivity between Homer Street and Hamilton Street

- See **2.4 Mid Block Connection**

- Consideration has been given to enhance the porosity at the street edges and develop greater public accessibility along all street faces

- Due to the existing floor levels of the existing heritage structure and grade changes across the site creating a direct pedestrian connection between Hamilton and Homer is not supportable in the project

- A mid block connection would not supported by the uses adjacent to either side of the project

- There is a possibility for some pedestrian links that will be explored through further design development

1.2 Response Summary