

June 20, 2017

City of Vancouver
Planning & Development Services
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC, V5T 1V4

Attn: Linda Gillan
Planner, Downtown Division

RE: 150 ROBSON STREET – DRAFT LETTER OF INTENT AND DESIGN RATIONALE

SITE CONTEXT

In this 24,289 sq.ft. lot assembly sits the Northern Electric Company Building, a three storey brick stone building listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register. The building is currently occupied by Catholic Charities Mens' Hostel. The building in its present form was built in two phases, the first in 1928 and the second in 1947.

The current lot assembly comprises three lots:

150 Robson Street, 16,361 sq.ft. , currently housing the Catholic Charities Men's Hostel;
118 Robson Street, 6,401 sq.ft. , currently a one storey commercial building and
a vacant 1,536 sq.ft lot on the north east corner, currently owned by the City of Vancouver.

AREA CHARACTER

This Robson Street Site of 260 ft. x 93 ft., encompasses the entire block between Beatty Street and Cambie Street. It is located within the Financial District of the "Downtown District". Older buildings around this area are of an earlier monumental character of predominantly office uses. New developments have changed the mix adding a significant amount of residential and hotel uses above commercial podiums with ground oriented retail.

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EMERGENT ARCHITECTURE

The overall image and character of Robson Street is created by the informal nature of the existing developments; the emphasis on pedestrian movement and activities; and significant volume of retailing at various shopping nodes. This portion of Robson, between Seymour and Beatty is of increasing importance as the major downtown pedestrian route to “BC Place” which creates a strong visual terminus to the east end of Robson Street.



INTENT AND PROPOSAL

The site is zoned under DD with an existing density limitation of 5.0 FSR with potential increase of up to 10% for the transfer of heritage floor space. The maximum permitted height is 137.2m (450 ft.) but is effectively limited by the “Cambie Street to North Shore Mountains” (9.1) View Cone. Hotel, residential and commercial retail are within the permitted uses.

The intent of this development is to build 29 levels of residential mixed-use with 5 levels of underground parking. The residential tower, with 131 residential units, sits above 4 to 6 levels of hotel space with ground floor hotel related retail space. The development is served by two Class B loading bays located adjacent to the lane, and six Class A stalls located within the first two levels of the underground parkade.

The proposed development consists of 160,423 sq.ft. (6.6 FSR) of market housing and 83,760 sq.ft. (3.45 FSR) of Hotel space with ancillary retail and restaurant. The combined density is 10.05 FSR within a maximum height of 290.2 ft limited by the View Cone. A common outdoor amenity space is located on the 5th level in association with 2,297 sq.ft. of internal amenity space. In order to realize this increase in density, the site will need to be rezoned to a CD-1 Comprehensive Development in keeping with the Downtown Official Development Plan and DD Guidelines. The developer wishes to enter into a Heritage Revitalization Agreement to obtain bonus density beyond 5.5 FSR. The existing Catholic Charities Men’s Hostel will be relocated to a new shelter space within the Downtown area.

FORM OF DEVELOPMENT

The development is comprised of three basic components: The Northern Electric building, the residential tower and the 6 storey hotel building on the east end of the site. The three components are meant to read as separate elements.

The Northern Electric Building:

The existing peripheral structure and complete envelope of the building will be preserved and restored to strict heritage conservation guidelines outlined in the conservation plan. The interior of the building, which has little heritage value left, will be replaced with new construction: hotel rooms on the second and third floors; and hotel restaurant and hotel coffee shop on the ground floor, along Robson Street. These hotel connected commercial uses at grade will animate this important pedestrian route. A clean public realm landscape design which includes the removal of the existing hedge along Robson Street,

will enable the movement of greater pedestrian volumes. It will also increase the permeability from the sidewalk towards the active uses inside the building, contributing to Robson's livability, informality and enjoyability. The two existing entrances along Robson will be maintained and used as the entrances from Robson Street to both the hotel restaurant and coffee shop.

The residential entrance is located on the north-west end of the Northern Electric building, activating the Cambie Street frontage. The existing entrance to the Catholic Charities Men's Hostel is currently located in the same place. We propose to increase the size of this entry by creating a clean and contemporary intervention on the elevation.

The new 6 storey Hotel Building:

This building is intended to relate to the form and character of the existing buildings along Beatty Street between Robson and Smithe; and at the same time help make the transition to the higher buildings to the north of Robson. It has a monolithic expression and the pattern of its fenestration responds to the scale and proportion of the buildings along that block of Beatty Street, addressing the special characteristics of its particular location. Along Robson Street this building provides a setback of 12.7 ft. from the property line, opening the views towards BC Place and Terry Fox Plaza. The setback will create opportunities for an outdoor patio space associated to the hotel lounge. The separation between the Northern Electric building and the new Hotel building will create a natural entrance to the hotel lounge from Robson Street. The main hotel entrance is located on the south end of this building with an adjacent passenger drop-off area off the lane.

The height of this building is limited to six storeys to decrease the shadow impact over the Terry Fox Plaza located east of Beatty Street. The building steps back at the 3rd floor, to keep the overshadowing to the minimum. (Refer to A-1.08 and A-1.08a) The upper storeys form a separate block that slightly rotates to emphasize the gesture and address Terry Fox Plaza.

The Residential Tower:

Reaching a maximum height of 290.2 ft. above the adjacent grade, the residential tower floor plate is restricted to 6,500 sq.ft. Its simple and uniform profile, with limited architectural elements, is mindful of the heritage character of the building it stands on. The tower is set back 19.5 ft. from the face of the Northern Electric building along the north and 22 ft. from the western face. The purpose of this last setback is to pull the western edge of the tower away from corner bay of the Northern Electric building. The proportions of the tower have been manipulated to decrease, within reason, the view impact of the corner unit of the 30 storey tower located on the north-east corner of Robson and Cambie, blocking less than one third of its views. Though maintaining a uniform tower profile, the massing is broken down by carefully shifting the balconies and varying the skin treatment of the façade, creating movement throughout the tower form. The area of linear balconies increase on the south elevation to address the sun exposure.