

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: New Westminster Design Panel **Date:** June 28, 2022

From: Amanda Mackaay, Development Planner **File:** OCP00036
HER00830

Item #: 2022-503

Subject: **Official Community Plan Amendment and Heritage Revitalization Agreement: 501 Fourth Avenue and 408 Fifth Street (Holy Eucharist Cathedral)**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the New Westminster Design Panel review the design submission and provide comments for applicant and staff consideration; and

THAT the New Westminster Design Panel consider a motion of support or non-support for the proposed Official Community Plan Amendment, Heritage Revitalization Agreement and Development Permit applications.

PURPOSE

Applications for an Official Community Plan Amendment and a Heritage Revitalization Agreement have been received for 501 Fourth Avenue and 408 Fifth Street; four lots which currently make up the Holy Eucharist Cathedral, rectory, and parking. The proposal would legally protect the existing 1968 cathedral in situ and expand related functions; increase the on-site non-profit daycare spaces to 74; and construct 14 new secured market rental units. The proposal would be accommodated through the construction of a five-storey, low-rise building on the west of the site (transitioning down to one-storey) and a two-storey residential building on the north of the site. Parking for the entire site would be primarily below the low-rise building.

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the New Westminster Design Panel (NWDP) in regard to the overall project design, and to receive comments from the Panel with special consideration of the items noted in the Design Considerations section of this report.

GUIDING POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Official Community Plan Land Use Designation

An OCP Amendment will be required to facilitate this development as it is not consistent with the “Residential – Detached and Semi-Detached Housing (RD)” land use designation for the site. An OCP Amendment to re-designate the site to “Mixed Use Low Rise” (ML) is being proposed.

While amendments may be considered, particularly given that the OCP is now five years old, staff generally supports amendments which are either: 1) minor and resulting in development that is relatively in alignment with the intent of the OCP; or, 2) providing benefits that are significantly over-and-above in relation to Council priorities.

The proposal generally fits the immediate context, including the higher density buildings and mixed uses on Sixth Street, one block to the west, and two existing three-storey apartment buildings across Fifth Street, and provides reasonable transition in scale to surrounding lower density uses. The commercial aspects of the project are located adjacent to the existing commercial corridor, away from surrounding residential uses.

The proposal also meets a number of Council priorities; in addition to the protection of a heritage asset, this development would increase non-profit childcare spaces from 22 to 74, and provide 14 new secured market-rental units. Council endorsed staff's recommendation to proceed with processing the application at their April 25, 2022 meeting.

Projects with Heritage Assets

The Official Community Plan (OCP) encourages the use of Heritage Revitalization Agreements (HRAs) when a heritage asset on a site is appropriately incorporated into a development. The OCP also indicates that through an HRA, a development may be eligible for incentives such as an increase in density or reduced parking requirements, which would make it viable to conserve assets with heritage merit.

Development Permit Area

Due to the current land use designation (RD), this site was not included in the Development Permit Area (DPA) for the Uptown commercial district. The intent of the DPA is to foster a community based, walkable mixed use area, with a strong pedestrian-oriented public realm. Staff recommend that an application to amend the OCP would include both the change of land use designation as well as the inclusion of the site in the Uptown DPA. This would ensure that the design of the building, and any future changes, would be consistent with the DPA's guidelines, and the goals for the Uptown area. The DPA envisions four-storey buildings which transition to the single detached dwellings in the adjacent neighbourhoods.

The DPA 4.1 guidelines can be accessed via:

[https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/OCP_DPA_4.1_Uptown_\(Consolidated_June_2020\).pdf](https://www.newwestcity.ca/database/files/library/OCP_DPA_4.1_Uptown_(Consolidated_June_2020).pdf)

Zoning Bylaw

The overall proposal is not consistent with the existing institutional (P-1) and single-detached dwelling (RS-4) zoning and would require site-specific relaxations to the Zoning Bylaw. An HRA is proposed to permit the proposal. Some of the zoning changes proposed include land use, and massing elements such as building height.

Heritage Revitalization Agreement

A Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) is a negotiated agreement between the City and a property owner for the purposes of heritage conservation. In exchange for long-term legal protection through a Heritage Designation Bylaw and exterior restoration, certain zoning relaxations may be considered. The *Policy for the Use of HRAs* lays out the process for HRAs and the zoning relaxations which may be considered. In this case, the HRA is being used both for relaxations related to incentivization of the heritage elements, and also like a rezoning, to permit a different building form.

Heritage Related Design Guidelines

Council endorsed *The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* in 2008 as a basis for assessing heritage projects within the city. These are national guidelines for best practice in heritage conservation and design.

All proposals for changes to heritage sites are carefully evaluated using this document. The guidelines recommend that character defining elements of a protected site be retained and restored. Additionally, the design of the adjacent new buildings are reviewed against the principles and guidelines in this document. The guidelines recommend that new buildings on a site with historic ones be:

- respectful of,
 - compatible with,
 - subordinate to, and
 - distinguishable from
- the historic elements of the site.

Family Friendly Housing Policy

The proposal would be required to provide the following in order to meet the City's Family-Friendly Housing Bylaw and Guidelines for secured market rental units. The policies require a minimum of 25% two and three bedroom units, of which 5% of the overall number of units would need to contain three bedrooms or more. The proposal is consistent with this policy.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site Characteristics and Context

The subject site, pictured in Figure 1 below, is on the western edge of the Queen's Park neighbourhood and Heritage Conservation Area, though neither property is protected under that policy. The site is approximately 2,243 sq.m. (24,140 sq.ft) in total, relatively flat, and made up of four lots. A cathedral is located on the site over two of the lots. The cathedral's heritage value was recently reviewed and confirmed by the Community Heritage Commission. A house, the lane, and parking lot make up the remainder of the site.

The west side of Fifth Street consists primarily of protected heritage houses. The two corners across Fifth Street to the east are three storey apartment buildings. The site is one block west of the Sixth Street Great Street; part of the frequent transit network (FTN) and a commercial precinct. Both Fifth Street and Fourth Avenue are classified as local roads. The site is roughly 1,000 ft. (570 m.) downhill from the Crosstown Greenway (bikeway).

The consolidation of the site would require the purchase of roughly 127 sq.m (1,365 sq.ft.) of City-owned land which consists of an undersized, unopened right of way currently used as an informal pedestrian connection.

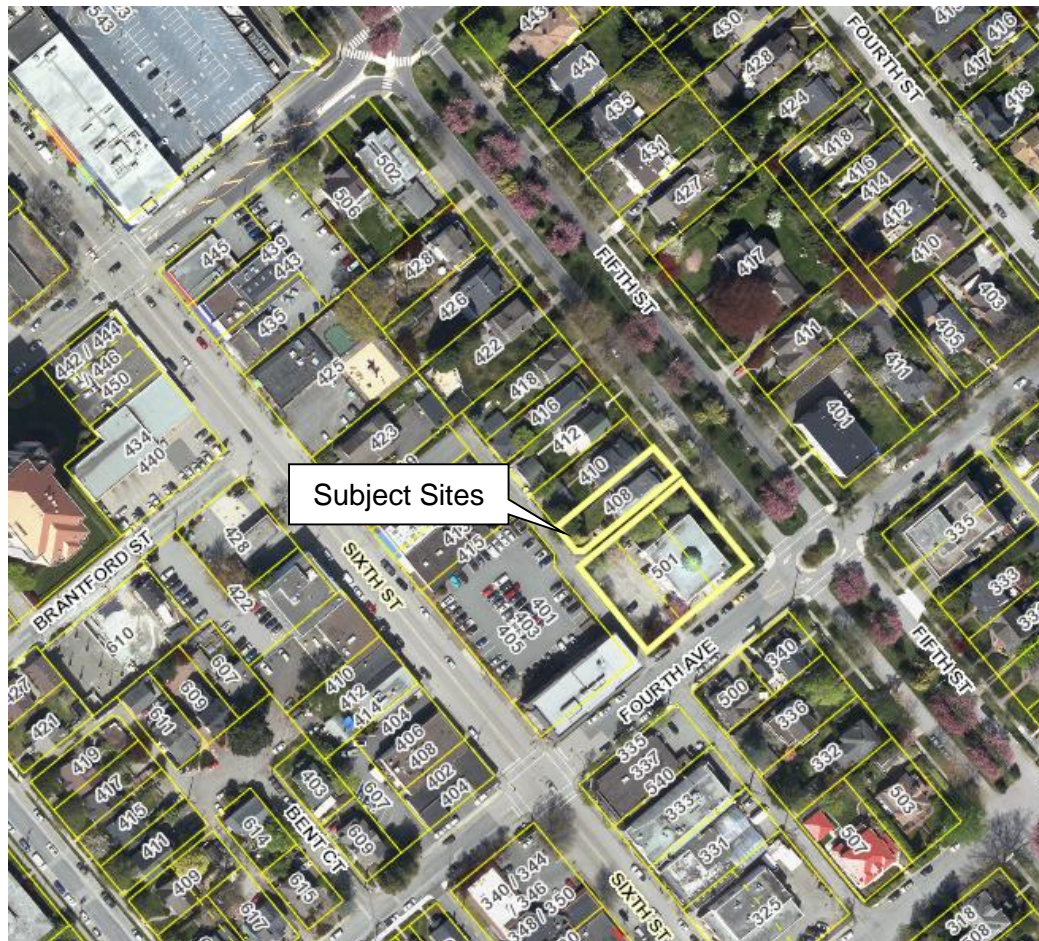


Figure 1. Site Context Map

Proposal

The proposal for the site includes three buildings: the existing three-storey (plus a central cupola) cathedral, a new five-storey mixed use building (2,336 sq. m / 25,147 sq.ft.), and a new two-storey residential rectory, or “manor” building (426 sq. m/ 4,590 sq.ft.). The cathedral would remain in situ; the five-storey building is proposed for the west side of the site and the rectory would be located on the north of the site, fronting onto Fifth Street, replacing an existing house on the site.

The project would provide 14 new secured market rental housing units, in addition to the church-owned and occupied rectory. The proposed mix of units meets the Family Friendly Housing Policy requirements. The project would also expand onsite childcare spaces from 74, located on levels two and three of the mixed-use building. The cathedral is not proposed to be expanded as part of the project; through the application, the community functions provided by the church would be formalized in the site's zoning. The overall site density would be roughly 1.42 floor space ratio (FSR). A full breakdown of the project statistics can be found on sheet PSA1 in Appendix B.

The proposal includes 34 off-street parking spaces, which is one space short of the Zoning Bylaw minimum for the site. All parking would be accommodated on site in an underground parkade, accessed off the commercial lane to the west of the site. The project also provides 21 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 8 short-term bicycle parking spaces in various locations around the site. The 5 proposed commercial short term bicycle spaces are one space short of the bylaw requirements. Staff will continue to work with the applicant to find a solution to address the minor shortfall in vehicle parking and commercial short term bicycle spaces.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The applicant's design rationale are included as Appendix A and the architectural and landscape drawings are included as Appendix B. Staff would appreciate comments from the New Westminster Design Panel on the proposed development, including how it responds to the Uptown DPA guidelines and principles. Some items identified by staff for consideration by the Panel are as follows:

Building Massing, Transition, and Contextual Fit

The Uptown Development Permit Area (DPA) design guidelines require that buildings of four to six storeys be set back by 3 meters (9'10") from the building edge below at the fourth storey and higher, in order to reduce bulk and overshadowing. The applicant is proposing a 0.6 meters (2 feet) setback on the west side and 1.8 meters (6 feet) setback on the east side of levels four and five: these are the two sides against the lane (west) and cathedral (east). Staff feel the proposed setbacks are reasonable as they create a more efficient layout on levels four and five, thereby supporting family-friendly sized units.

The mixed-use building has also been designed to "step back" from the cathedral. The east side of the building is set back approximately 3.6 meters (12 feet) at the second floor up to 6 meters (19 feet) at the fifth floor, with the goal of reducing the appearance of massing and bulk against the existing cathedral in accordance with the City's design guidelines. The roof of level three has been designed to align with the adjacent commercial building as well as the parapet line of the cathedral.

The north side of the mixed-use building steps down to one storey to soften the transition to neighboring single-detached dwelling uses and in alignment with the guidelines. The two northern ground oriented units are similar in scale to laneways houses, which are permitted behind the adjacent heritage homes. To further assist with transition to the existing neighbourhood, the rectory building has been designed at a similar scale as a large single detached dwelling.

Open Space and Pedestrian Circulation

The Uptown DPA guidelines call for landscape design that is focused on privacy, open space and rainwater management, optimizing livability, and facilitating neighbourly interactions.

In addition to the existing daycare play area located to the east of the cathedral, a second outdoor play area is proposed for daycare use on level two of the mixed-use building. A patio with perimeter planting is also provided on level two off the daycare waiting area. A multi-use amenity space is proposed for all tenants on the rooftop of the mixed use building. The rooftop amenity area includes an outdoor kitchen and dining area, an outdoor lounge area and fire table, as well as a children's play area that is separated with a trellis and privacy fence.

Outdoor common space is also proposed in an internal courtyard located between the manor building, mixed-use building and the rear of the cathedral. This space includes a communal patio with a BBQ and harvest table, as well as softscaping. Semi-private patios are proposed at the entrances to manor house units and the two ground-oriented residential units at the north of the site to facilitate social interaction in alignment with the design guidelines.

Pedestrian access to the two ground-oriented units at the rear and manor house is provided via an internal pedestrian walkway that travels from Fifth Street through to the rear of the building, terminating at the doors of the units abutting the lane. Pedestrian access for the mixed-use building would be provided through an elevator lobby off Fourth Avenue. The cathedral is proposed to have two access points: through the basement at street level as well as via the elevator in the mixed-use building.

Vehicular Access and Lane Edge

The proposed building includes a vehicular entrance and an electrical pad-mounted transformer (PMT) along the lane (west) side of the property. This edge of the property, given that it fronts onto a lane, accommodates less active and more utilitarian functions of the building including solid waste and recycling collection.

Staff are working with the applicant to shift the lane to the east to soften the existing jog, as well as, create a suitable separation between the lane and building face for both 403 Sixth Street and the proposed mixed-use building. The realignment of the lane coupled with the need to provide an appropriate setback from the cathedral on the east side of the building will minimize the setback between the lane and building face, thus reducing the opportunities for lane activation. Suitable opportunities for activation and further softscaping along the lane to improve the building interface will continue to be explored as the review process continues. Comments from the design panel on ways to achieve further activation would be appreciated.

Building Materials

The Development Permit Area guidelines call for the use of high quality materials to enhance the quality and character of Uptown. Wood, stone, brick and metal panel are preferred cladding materials, while composite or cementitious panels are also permitted.

The applicant has applied heritage best practices to the design of the new mixed use building and manor building. As such, contemporary materials are proposed to distinguish the two new buildings from the historic building, while taking inspiration from the colour palette of the cathedral in to remain compatible.

The proposed material and colour palette for the mixed-use building are shown on the material sample board on sheet AR11 in Appendix B, which include, but are not limited to, a panelized fiber cement rainscreen cladding system in a series of subtle natural gray colours. Decorative glazed blades with a coloured interlayer are proposed on the west side of the building with the intention of providing a playful feature that distinguishes the childcare floors of the building.

For the manor, shown on sheet AR12 of Appendix B, horizontally staggered cedar shingles are proposed to transition the development into the surrounding residential neighborhood, this material is recommended in the Heritage Conservation Area's design guidelines. The shingles would be finished in a semi-translucent light gray stain to allow for the visibility of the wood grain.

Copper anodized aluminum composite panels are proposed for both new buildings, taking inspiration from the copper metal panels that clad the dome of the cathedral. A series of natural gray accents are proposed for areas such as trim boards, door and window casings to emulate the gray pebble dash on the cathedral exterior.

Questions for the Design Panel's Consideration

In addition to seeking general comments from the New Westminster Design Panel (NWDP) in regard to the overall design of the proposed development and the above-mentioned design considerations, staff has identified the following questions for the NWDP to provide specific response to:

1. Staff seeks input from the NWDP in regard to the project design, including the selection of building materials and colour scheme, and how the proposed development addresses the Uptown Development Permit Area Guidelines.
2. Staff seeks input from the NWDP in regard to the overall scale, massing, and expression of the proposed buildings.
3. Staff seeks input from the NWDP in regard to the transition between the proposed development and adjacent properties, and how the project fits within the surrounding neighbourhood context.
4. Staff seeks input from the NWDP in regard to the proposed site layout, including the pedestrian walkways, and siting of the parking and vehicular access.

5. Staff seeks input from the NWDP in regard to the proposed central courtyard area, outdoor amenity areas, private open space, and other landscaping features.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Applicant Design Rationale

Appendix B: Architectural and Landscape Drawings

This report was prepared by:

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This report was reviewed and approved by:

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