

POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Downtown Community Plan Land Use Designation

The subject site is located within the Albert Crescent Precinct in the Downtown Community Plan (DCP), a primarily residential area with a focus on housing for families. The DCP directs new development to be designed to maintain the area’s human-scale while enhancing the pedestrian realm.

The subject site is designated “Residential – Tower Apartment” in the DCP. This designation allows for:

- Residential development in the form of high-rise, mid-rise, and low-rise apartments, as well as ground-oriented townhouses;
- Community amenities such as churches, child care, libraries, or community space; and,
- Small-scale, corner store type retail, restaurant, and service uses.

The form of the proposed development is generally consistent with the “Residential – Tower Apartment” land use designation in the DCP.

Development Permit Area

The site is within the D1 Downtown Development and Special Development Permit Area (DPA). The DPA seeks to support Downtown’s Regional Town Centre designation in the Regional Growth Strategy. This DPA outlines objectives and guidelines for:

- The form and character of commercial, multi-family, institutional and intensive residential development;
- Protection of the natural environment, its ecosystems and biological diversity;
- Revitalization of an area in which a commercial use is permitted; and,
- Objectives to promote energy and water conservation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

A Special Development Permit (SDP) is required before doing any work that would result in development of or alteration to the lands or building exteriors within this portion of the Downtown. SDPs function similar to a regular Development Permit, but under the New Westminster Redevelopment Act, the City was given special authority to regulate urban redevelopment within this area. SDPs can be issued by the Director of Planning and Development.

Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines and Master Plan

The Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines and Master Plan provides guidance for achieving a high quality, cohesive Downtown that honors the historical and cultural context of New Westminster. This document informs public realm improvements both on- and off-site within the Downtown area.

The subject site is located within the Albert Crescent Precinct, within the Agnes Street corridor, which is described as follows:

The Agnes Street corridor will be designed as a pedestrian friendly east-west connection across the precinct with landscaped boulevards that will incorporate rain gardens, outdoor seating areas and contained parking embayments to achieve a more intimate neighbourhood scale to the street. The development of housing suitable for families, and the preservation of existing market rental housing stock aims to maintain the social diversity of the neighbourhood.

Zoning

The subject site is zoned Multiple Dwelling Districts (Low Rise) (RM-2). The intent of this zone is to allow low-rise apartment development (up to 1.2 FSR) with an opportunity for increased density, up to 1.8 Floor Space Ratio (FSR) upon amenity provision conditions being met. A rezoning to a site-specific, Comprehensive Development (CD) zone would be required to facilitate the proposed form of development.

Transit Oriented Development Area

The subject site is located within Tier 3 of the Columbia Station Transit Oriented Development (TOD) area (400 m. to 800 m.). Properties within Tier 3 may be considered for additional building height (up to 8 storeys) and density (up to 3.0 FSR) under the Minimum Density (MD) Framework. The proposed development exceeds the MD Framework.

On June 24, 2024, Council approved Zoning Bylaw amendments that remove off-street residential parking requirements, excepting accessible parking, within TOD areas. Given the reduction in off-street residential parking, additional Transportation Demand Management measures may be necessary to support new development.

Downtown Transportation Plan

The subject site is within the boundaries of the Downtown Transportation Plan, which identifies network improvements for the surrounding transportation networks including:

- Development of Agnes Street as a primary cycling route (Agnes Greenway) inclusive of dedicated cycling facilities;
- Improved pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure on First Street for those travelling from Downtown and the Agnes Greenway to Queen’s Park;

- Prioritized access to curb space; and,
- Improved accessibility with seating and resting opportunities.

Family Friendly Housing Bylaw

On November 18, 2024 Council adopted Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Family Friendly Housing Policy) No. 8486, 2024. This bylaw implements the Family Friendly Housing Policy (2024), which is an update to the 2016 Family Friendly Housing Policy. This updated policy introduces new required ratios of two and three bedroom units in multi-unit residential projects containing more than 10 units, as well as minimum unit sizes for one-, two-, and three-bedroom units.

The 2024 policy includes protections for rezoning applications that were in-stream prior to bylaw adoption. As such, the proposed project is exempt from the 2024 requirements, and is required to comply with the 2016 Family Friendly Housing Policy. Per the 2016 policy, the development must provide the following:

- Rental units: A minimum of 25% of units must contain two or more bedrooms, of which at least 5% must contain three bedrooms; and,
- Stratified market condo units: A minimum of 30% of units must contain two or more bedrooms, of which at least 10% must contain three bedrooms.

PAST APPLICATIONS

A Pre-Application review had been submitted for the subject site, and was presented to the Land Use and Planning Committee (LUPC) on February 4, 2019 ([report](#) / [minutes](#)). At that time, the proposal included a 24-storey residential tower and podium, inclusive of 60 secured market rental units, and a total FSR of 5.05. The LUPC endorsed consideration of the proposed density and height, on the condition that the following be clarified: 1) the proposed tenure and mix of missing middle housing units; 2) interaction of the development with Albert Crescent Park; and 3) the development’s tenant relocation plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site Characteristics and Context

The subject site is approximately 4,620 sq. m. (49,729 sq. ft.) and is located in the Downtown neighbourhood, directly north of Albert Crescent Park. It is steeply sloped, with an approximate grade change of 15% from the north corner (Agnes Street at Hastings Street) to the south-east corner (Albert Crescent at Wellington Street). The site is improved with a 61-unit low-rise apartment building.

The Agnes Greenway spans the property’s northwest edge, while Albert Crescent Park and a City-owned parcel at 37 Wellington Street abut the property’s south and east property lines. Properties surrounding Albert Crescent Park are currently, or are approved for, residential tower development. Properties northwest and northeast of the

site are a combination of low density and mid-rise residential developments, and are designated for low-rise and mid-rise residential apartment through the Downtown Community Plan.

Figure 1: Site Context Map with 65 First Street in blue



Proposal

The applications propose two residential towers at 65 First Street, at heights of 30 and 35 storeys, and preliminary drawings indicate an FSR of 10.58. The two buildings would be connected by a podium and upper level amenity bridge. Tower A would be rental tenure, comprising 299 market rental units and 30 below-market units. Of these rental units, 99 (30.1%) would contain two bedrooms and 40 (12.2%) would contain three bedrooms. Tower B would contain 304 stratified market condo units. Of these condo units, 91 (29.9%) would contain two bedrooms and 38 (12.5%) would contain three bedrooms.

Ground-oriented townhouses are proposed along the site’s frontages. Wellington Street and a portion of Hastings Street, made redundant through the application, would be closed to vehicles and repurposed as park space in the future. Albert Crescent (road) would similarly be closed to vehicles and replaced with a new 4.0 m. (13.1 ft.) mixed-use path (MUP), which would connect Agnes Street to the new Patullo Bridge cycling infrastructure.

The applicant’s design rationale, architectural drawings, and landscape drawings are included as Attachment 1.

Project Statistics

	Permitted / Required Under RM-2 Zoning	Proposed
Net Site Area	-	4,406 sq. m. (47,425.8 sq. ft.)
Site Coverage	40%	86.3%
Density FSR <i>or</i> Housing units	1.2 FSR or up to 1.8 FSR pursuant to satisfaction of amenity conditions 60 units per net acre	10.58 FSR
Residential Units		
Stratified condo	-	304
Market rental	-	299
Below-market rental	-	30
Total	60 units per net acre	633
Building Height	10.67 m. (35 ft.) or 13.72 m. (45 ft.) pursuant to satisfaction of amenity contributions	Tower A: 121.9 m. (399.9 ft.) Tower B: 104.9 m. (344.2 ft.)
Setbacks		
Front (Agnes St.)	7.62 m. (25 ft.)	4.57 m. (15 ft.)
Rear (East)	7.62 m. (25 ft.)	3.05 m. (10 ft.)
Side (Hastings St.)	7.62 m. (25 ft.)	4.57 m. (15 ft.)
Side (First St.)	7.62 m. (25 ft.)	4.57 m. (15 ft.)
Side (Albert Cresc.)	7.62 m. (25 ft.)	3.05 m. (10 ft.)
Off-Street Parking ¹		
Residential	Not required	369
Visitor	Not required	32
Total		401
Accessible Parking	22	26
Off-street Loading	2	2
Bicycle Parking		
Long-term	950 spaces	1,273 spaces
Short-term	12 spaces	12 spaces

¹ Required off-street parking reflects TOD area site context

Access and Parking

The primary Tower A and secondary Tower B pedestrian entries are proposed from Hastings Street, while the primary Tower B entrance would be accessed through the project’s central drive court. Vehicle and cyclist access is proposed from Hastings Street and First Street. While residential vehicle parking is not required per TOD area

legislation, with the exception of accessible parking, 401 resident (0.6 spaces per unit) and 32 visitor (0.05 spaces per unit) spaces are proposed. A total of 1,273 long-term bicycle and 12 short-term bicycle parking spaces would be provided, exceeding Zoning Bylaw requirements.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The applicant’s design rationale is included in Attachment 1. Staff would appreciate comments from the NWDP on the proposed development, including how it responds to the Downtown DPA Design Guidelines and the Downtown Building and Public Realm Design Guidelines and Masterplan (DBPRDGM). Some items identified by staff for consideration by the Panel are detailed below. Staff ask that consideration be given to the visibility of the project from both near and far distances, given the visual prominence of the site.

Overall Scale, Massing, and Tower Articulation

The Downtown DPA Guidelines state that the massing and form of buildings should showcase high level design and creativity, respecting the pedestrian scale and heritage assets found throughout this neighbourhood. Variations to shape, massing, and exterior finishes are encouraged to avoid a repetitive appearance. The guidelines further encourage creation of focal points at prominent intersections, such as the southeast corner of First Street at Agnes Street, which offers a key vista of the Fraser River.

The applicant has proposed two towers set atop a podium of between two to four storeys. The towers are separated by a distance of 30.2 m. (99.1 ft.), in excess of DBPRDGM requirements, with Tower A (35 storeys) situated on the high side of the site and Tower B (30 storeys) located downslope. Tower floorplates are proposed to be approximately 690.6 sq. m. (7,434 sq. ft.), which is consistent with DBPRDGM floorplate limits. Proposed vertical design elements include solid fascia in varying widths along balcony edges, and vertically patterned spandrel glass and clear glazing.

Staff seeks input from the NWDP with regard to:

- *The overall scale and massing of the development, and how it fits within the surrounding neighbourhood;*
- *The proposed vertical and horizontal design elements and how these contribute to the overall tower design;*
- *Integration of the podium and towers; and,*
- *Tower articulation, including the relationship between the two towers, with respect to balancing the need for distinction with creation of a cohesive development.*

Building Interface and Public Realm Activation

The Albert Crescent Precinct vision in the DBPRDGM includes a focus on human-scale development, intended to enhance the pedestrian experience. Well-articulated, ground-

oriented housing is supported to help further this objective. The guidelines also provide direction on topic areas including building siting, street-relationship, sidewalk animation, entrances, windows, facades, and balconies. The DBPRDGM further directs new development to consider all street frontages as primary and to develop a strong relationship with each, rather than designing a “front” and “back” to new buildings.

With respect to Albert Crescent Park, the DBPRDGM notes that the park will be formally programmed in the future to promote active family use and maximize views of the Fraser River, noting towers around its perimeter would enhance its character. Future planning for the park is being done through the ongoing Parks and Recreation Plan process.

Staff seeks input from the NWDP with regard to how the development contributes to the Albert Crescent Precinct vision, with respect to:

- *Design of the development to a human-scale, and creation of an active public realm;*
- *Relationship of the development to and interface with Albert Crescent Park and the adjacent City-owned parcel at 37 Wellington Street;*
- *Treatment of each street frontage as a primary frontage; and,*
- *Design of well-articulated ground-oriented housing.*

Building Conclusion

The Downtown DPA guidelines call for consideration of the building conclusion (the top several floors, roof and mechanical systems) through special consideration of the form, massing, and detail for the top several floors and rooftop. Per the guidelines, rooftop mechanical and service equipment should be screened in a way that incorporates it as an integral part of the building’s architectural design.

The top two floors of each tower are differentiated from lower floors through reduced floorplates and variations in balcony design. Rooftop mechanical elements are proposed to be screened using white aluminum louvres.

Staff seeks input from the NWDP with regard to the towers’ conclusion, screening of mechanical elements, and how this is tied to the overall building design.

Common Amenity Areas

The project proposes common resident amenity spaces on Levels 1 and 2, which would be shared between tenures. Both indoor (310 sq. m. / 3,336.8 sq. ft.) and outdoor (852 sq. m. / 9,170.9 sq. ft.) space is proposed, and the two towers would be connected via a pedestrian bridge at Level 2. Additional indoor (171 sq. m. / 1,840.6 sq. ft.) and outdoor (148 sq. m. / 1,593.1 sq. ft.) amenity space proposed on Level 20 of Tower B would be accessible to strata residents only.

Staff seeks input from the NWDP on the scale, design, and overall program of proposed indoor and outdoor resident amenity spaces.

Questions for the Design Panel’s Consideration

In addition to seeking general comments from the NWDP in regard to the overall design of the proposed development, staff seeks input from the NWDP in regard to:

- 1. The overall scale and massing of the development, and how it fits within the surrounding neighbourhood;
- 2. The proposed vertical and horizontal design elements and how these contribute to the overall tower design;
- 3. Integration of the podium and towers;
- 4. Tower articulation, including the relationship between the two towers, with respect to balancing the need for distinction with creation of a cohesive development;
- 5. Design of the development to a human-scale, and creation of an active public realm;
- 6. Relationship of the development to and interface with Albert Crescent Park and the adjacent City-owned parcel at 37 Wellington Street;
- 7. Treatment of each street frontage as a primary frontage;
- 8. Design of well-articulated ground-oriented housing;
- 9. The towers’ conclusion, screening of mechanical elements, and how this is tied to the overall building design; and,
- 10. The scale, design, and overall program of proposed indoor and outdoor resident amenity spaces.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Applicant’s Architectural and Landscape Submission Package

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
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This report was approved by:
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