



## Attachment 1

### Background Information

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Downtown Community Plan Land Use Designation**

The subject site is designated Columbia Historic Mixed Use in the Downtown Community Plan. This designation permits mixed-use buildings with active commercial frontages along Columbia Street and allows for residential, retail, office, service, restaurant, arts and culture, and recreational uses. It currently supports building heights of up to 12 storeys on non-heritage sites greater than 1,214 square metres.

The proposed development, which includes both residential and commercial uses within a compact, high-density, transit-oriented built form, generally aligns with the intent of the designation. As the site is under 1,214 square metres, an Official Community Plan Amendment is not required. However, the proposal exceeds the density and height limits of the current zoning and requires a Rezoning and Special Development Permit.

### **Development Permit Area**

The subject site is located within the Downtown Development Permit Area and is subject to both Special Development Permit and Form and Character guidelines. Objectives of this DPA include:

- Supporting the Downtown Regional City Centre designation in the Regional Growth Strategy;
- Promoting high-quality, transit-oriented development;
- Encouraging active commercial frontages and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes;
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving environmental performance.

A Development Permit, issued by the Director of Planning and Development, is required before any development or alteration to the lands.

### **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 reflects the historical and cultural character of New Westminster. The document informs both private development and public realm improvements throughout the Downtown area.

The subject site is located within the area commonly referred to as the Columbia Street Historic Precinct, which is characterized by narrow frontages, a saw-tooth skyline, and early 20th-century commercial architecture. The guidelines support the preservation and rehabilitation of heritage buildings, and guide new development to be compatible with the scale, massing, and rhythm of the existing streetscape.

The guidelines emphasize Columbia Street's role as a primary pedestrian corridor in the Downtown, with active commercial frontages, transparent storefronts, and public realm elements such as street trees, historically inspired paving materials, and outdoor

seating. Upper storeys of new development are expected to be set back from the podium to maintain a human scale at the street.

As outlined in the plan:

*“Continue to highlight Columbia Street as the main pedestrian corridor in the Downtown where retail and entertainment uses [are concentrated], with opportunities to build on the area between Fourth Street and Eighth Street.”*

## **Zoning Bylaw**

The subject site is currently zoned Downtown Mixed Use Districts (High Density) (C-4). This zone permits a mix of residential, retail, office, and service uses intended to support high-density development in the Downtown. The C-4 zone allows a base Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of 1.2, with opportunities to increase density up to 5.2 FSR through the provision of eligible amenities under the City’s density bonus provisions. The zone also permits a maximum building height of 12.19 metres.

The proposed development - a 42-storey mixed-use building with a total FSR of 32.5 - substantially exceeds both the permitted base and bonus density, as well as the height limit under the current zoning. As such, a Zoning Bylaw Amendment to a site-specific Comprehensive Development (CD) zone is required to accommodate the proposed form, scale, and land use configuration.

## **Interim Development Review Framework and Financing Growth Policy**

The Provincial government has introduced broad changes to housing legislation that affect how municipalities plan for and approve new development, and how growth is financed. In response, the City of New Westminster is reviewing and updating applicable regulations, policies, and development approval processes. In the interim, Council has adopted a series of policies to guide application review.

In January 2024, Council endorsed the Interim Development Review Framework (IDRF), which provides direction for evaluating new development applications. Under the IDRF, the City distinguishes between stratified residential and secured market rental projects.

For stratified multi-unit residential proposals, applicants are generally expected to contribute either:

1. **Affordable housing** in accordance with the Inclusionary Housing Policy (IHP); or
2. **Fixed-rate cash contributions and/or in-kind amenities** in accordance with the Interim Density Bonus Policy (IDBP).

By contrast, projects advanced as **secured market rental housing** are exempt from both the Inclusionary Housing Policy and the Interim Density Bonus Policy. In these cases, no voluntary amenity contributions or density bonus payments are required, provided that the tenure is secured through a Housing Agreement registered on title for the life of the building or a minimum of 60 years.

The proposed development at 801 Columbia Street is being advanced as a secured market rental project and is therefore exempt from Inclusionary Housing and Interim Density Bonus Policy requirement.

### **Transit Oriented Development Area**

The subject site is located within Tier 1 of the Columbia Station Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Area, approximately 60 metres from the Columbia SkyTrain Station. While the site aligns with the intent of the Provincial Transit-Oriented Areas legislation (Bill 47) to support higher-density development near transit, it is located within the Downtown Community Plan Area, which is excluded from the as-of-right entitlements introduced through the Provincial legislation. As such, the site is not eligible for automatic height or density allowances and remains subject to the City's rezoning process and policies.

On June 24, 2024, Council approved Zoning Bylaw amendments that eliminated residential off-street parking requirements (excluding accessible parking) within TOD Areas. In place of on-site residential parking, development proposals may be required to implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to support sustainable transportation choices.

While no residential parking is proposed for this development, accessible and commercial parking remain required under the City's Zoning Bylaw and the BC Building Code. These components will be further reviewed as part of the development application process.

### **Secured Market Rental Housing Policy**

The Secured Market Rental Housing Policy applies to development applications that propose new purpose-built rental housing. The policy requires that units be secured through a Housing Agreement registered on title for the life of the building or a minimum of 60 years.

In recognition of the public benefits associated with secured rental tenure, the policy provides a number of incentives, including exemption from the Inclusionary Housing Policy, exemption from density bonus contributions and Voluntary Amenity Contributions (VAC), and other measures intended to support the delivery of secured rental housing.

The proposed development at 801 Columbia Street is being advanced as a 100% secured market rental project, and is therefore subject to this policy and eligible for its associated incentives.

### **Family-Friendly Housing Policy**

The Family-Friendly Housing Policy applies to all multi-unit residential developments containing more than 10 units. For secured market rental projects, the policy requires that a minimum of 30% of units include two or three bedrooms, with at least 10% of the total units containing three bedrooms or more. As of November 1, 2026, the requirement for secured market rental projects will increase to 35% of units having two or three bedrooms.

The proposed development at 801 Columbia Street includes a total of 303 secured rental units. Of these, 62 units (21%) are two-bedroom and 30 units (10%) are three-bedroom, resulting in a combined total of 92 two- and three-bedroom units, or exactly 30% of the overall unit count. The proposal therefore meets the current requirements of the Family-Friendly Housing Policy for both the number of larger units and the proportion of three-bedroom units.

### **Downtown Transportation Plan**

The subject site is located within the boundaries of the Downtown Transportation Plan, which supports the development of a well-connected, multi-modal transportation network in the city's core. Both Columbia Street and Eighth Street are identified as Enhanced Pedestrian Streets, intended to prioritize walking, improve access to transit, and enhance the quality of the public realm.

The Plan emphasizes improved access to the SkyTrain network and encourages development that supports transit ridership and reduces dependence on private automobiles. The subject site is immediately adjacent to the New Westminster SkyTrain Station and is well-served by multiple frequent bus routes. The Plan identifies this area as a priority location for public realm improvements, including widened sidewalks, safe and accessible transit connections, and active commercial frontages.

The proposed development includes a publicly accessible elevator connecting Columbia Street to the SkyTrain concourse, as well as tree planting, patio seating, and pedestrian-scale lighting and paving. Staff are aware of challenges with on-going maintenance of the proposed elevator. Staff will work with the applicant to explore lower maintenance alternatives, such as a public stair.

Staff will also explore, in conjunction with TransLink, opportunities to enhance the connections to the adjacent SkyTrain Station. These elements align with the objectives of the Downtown Transportation Plan to enhance the pedestrian experience and support sustainable transportation choices.

### **SITE CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT**

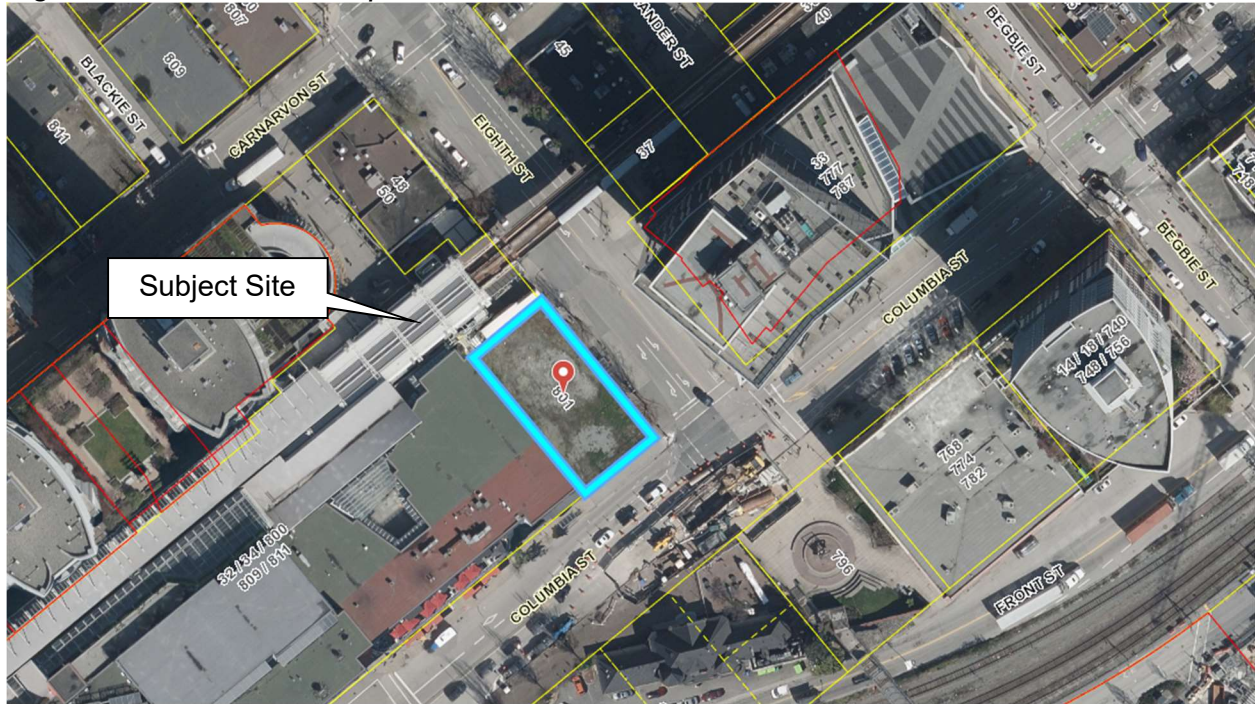
The subject site is located at 801 Columbia Street, at the northeast corner of Columbia Street and Eighth Street, within the Downtown neighbourhood of New Westminister. The lot is approximately 809 square metres (8,709 sq. ft.) in area and is currently vacant. It is rectangular in shape, with approximately 17.6 metres of frontage along Columbia Street and 40.2 metres along Eighth Street.

The site is directly adjacent to the Shops at New West, a three-storey commercial complex that provides direct pedestrian access to the New Westminister SkyTrain Station concourse. It is situated in a highly urbanized, transit-oriented context and is surrounded by a mix of commercial and high-density residential development.

The broader area has experienced significant redevelopment in recent years, with approved and constructed towers ranging from 30 to 53 storeys. The site also falls within the Columbia Street Historic Precinct and occupies a prominent corner location connecting Downtown to both the SkyTrain and bus network. The block includes a mix

of designated heritage buildings, new mixed-use towers, and major public infrastructure, reinforcing the site's importance as a key node in the city's regional growth and transit framework.

Figure 1. Site Context Map with 801 Columbia Street in blue



*Table 1. Site Proximity to Transit Service*

| <b>Transit Facility</b>          | <b>Approx. Frequency</b>     | <b>Approx. Distance</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| New Westminster SkyTrain Station | Every 2–5 minutes (peak)     | Approx. 60 m (197 ft.)  |
| - Route 101 (22nd St – Lougheed) | 15–30 minutes                | Adjacent to station     |
| - Route 105 (New West – Uptown)  | 15–30 minutes                | Adjacent to station     |
| - Route 106 (Edmonds)            | 15–20 minutes                | Adjacent to station     |
| - Route 109 (Lougheed)           | 15–30 minutes                | Adjacent to station     |
| - Route 123 (Brentwood)          | 10–20 minutes                | Adjacent to station     |
| - Route 128 (22nd – Braid)       | 15–30 minutes                | Adjacent to station     |
| - Route N19 (NightBus)           | Every 30 minutes (overnight) | Adjacent to station     |