

RIVER DISTRICT PARCEL 16.2
VANCOUVER, BC

DESIGN RATIONALE

Issued For Development Permit Application
November 16, 2017

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OVERVIEW/ VISION

Located 10km from Downtown Vancouver, Parcel 16.2 sits in an area formerly known as East Fraser Lands (EFL) on the banks of the Fraser River in the southeast corner of the city between Kerr Street and Boundary Road, and south of Marine Way. Now designated the River District, this new cohesive and vibrant neighbourhood features all the necessary community amenities, waterfront access and healthy living. The south property edge of Parcel 16.2 sits directly along the Canadian Pacific Rail corridor, which bisects the north and south sections of the River District. To the northeast is the newly formed retail centre of the Town Square precinct, directly off Sawmill Crescent. Adjacent to the site on the east, and sitting on the other half of parcel 16, is a 6-storey mixed-use residential building with commercial retail units at grade—this building is currently under construction. The site acts as a gateway for entry to the River District off Marine Way along Sawmill Crescent to the west and as a visual definer from the town square open space to the east.

The vision for the development lends itself to creating an architectural expression that originates from a sense of place and history of the River District.

INSPIRATION/LEGACY

Until 1850, East Fraser Lands was a relatively untouched coniferous forest of hemlock and cedar. It was not until the early twentieth century that the land was subdivided by the BC Electric Railway: establishing an inter-urban line between Eburne and New Westminster with a rail service. This inherently industrialized what we now call the River District. Throughout much of the 20th century, the riverfront property was the site of lumber manufacturing activities including the Canadian White Pine Sawmill. All lumber processing stopped in 2001 and the mill was dismantled in 2004—leaving few vestiges of its existence. Still, there are various opportunities, within the River District development, to honour this industrial heritage, while recalling and celebrating the legacy and historic memory of the site. The mill that occupied the East Fraser Lands site for much of the last century represents an important stage in the history of British Columbia and the Fraser River. Parcel 16.2's design will integrate forms, ideas and physical elements—such as the freestanding conical steel structure beehive burners, the parade of log booms along the Fraser River and the fluted V rollers from the mills that moved raw logs from the water to the mill for debarking and sawing—that represent the industrial legacy

of the site. Each one of these recall the forms, components, and materials of the working river and the historic mill connecting the development of Parcel 16.2 and the River District to its past.

PUBLIC REALM/CONTEXTUAL RESPONSE

Designated as one of the tallest developments in the River District, Parcel 16.2 will anchor views from within and to the community. The parcel is highly exposed along Sawmill Crescent when arriving to the River District from the west, so a fitting emphasis has been placed on the development at the corner of Road “A” and Sawmill Crescent. The Sawmill Crescent street frontage has a high degree of articulation and a strong street wall base that continues its defining lines through to neighbouring parcels. The use of architectural elements along these edges provides interest and pauses for pedestrians passing by the development. A 25-storey tower punctuates the view from the Marine Way entrance and anchors the view from the woonerf in the South High Street precinct. With high exposure along the Kent Avenue corridor, the rhythm of the south facing townhouses create a neighbourhood scale and character along the adjacent greenway while providing a strong definition to this expansive open space. A shared mid-block mews for parcel 16 provides pedestrian, vehicular and loading access, with a ramp giving residents and visitors access to underground parking. Located on the southeast corner of the property directly off the mews is a public bike share, which will connect directly to the Kent Avenue bikeway. Frontage on Road “A” is urban in character with minimal setbacks allowing for some plantings and stairs leading up to the recessed front doors of live/work units while offering a degree of privacy. The main residential entrance is located along Sawmill Crescent beneath the tower massing closest to the Town Square Centre, while the secondary residential entrance is located at the corner of Road “A” and Sawmill Crescent. The architectural details at each of these entrances recall the beehive burners of the past—signifying their importance.

BUILDING FORM

The Town Square precinct, with Sawmill Crescent as its primary thoroughfare, is at the heart of the River District community and has an urban character. The urban character is emphasized with modest setbacks and a continuous 6-storey streetwall that is shaped to reinforce the arcing curve of Sawmill Crescent. The above grade streetwall mass is divided into two horizontal massing elements. The first has the lowest storeys setback from the property edge and

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contains two-storey live/work units fronting onto Sawmill Crescent and Road “A”.

The second massing element starts at the third storey and reaches the top of the podium. It also follows the arcing curve of Sawmill Crescent but protrudes out of the first mass towards the street. When this mass reaches the Road “A” intersection it cantilevers beyond the mass below. This forms a defining long bending rectangular massing adding emphases and interest to the highly visible corner of Sawmill Crescent and Road “A”. Along Road “A” the upper massing drops from 6 to 5-storeys and the top most floor is set back. This reduced podium height ensures ample solar penetration into the interior courtyard for mid-day sun, and provides for a softer transition in scale to the townhouses.

Townhouses frame the south edge of the second storey amenity courtyard and create an active streetscape with a strong rhythm that relates at the pedestrian scale. This portion of the development shares a similar expression to the streetwall along Road “A” and the west podium massing. Between the 5-storey west podium massing and the lower 3-storey townhouses, an opening has been shaped to frame views towards the Fraser River from the courtyard amenity. The lower townhouse massing also allows greater solar access to the mid-block courtyard.

The 25-storey tower massing is located toward the northeast corner of the site—adjacent to Sawmill Crescent and the shared lane mews between Parcel 16.2 and Parcel 16.1. The proposed design of the tower generally reflects the prescribed EFL planning guidelines in terms of form, height and placement. The massing is a relatively calm, elegant form and its simple orthogonal geometry provides contrast to the arcing podium massing below.

CHARACTER/RESIDENTIAL

The development as a whole and the residential units within have been designed to maximize views—Mt. Baker and the Burnaby skyline to the east, the iconic North Shore Mountains to the north, the Fraser River and ocean to the west, then the waterfront and Fraser River to the south.

Tower

The tower recalls the simple, strong sculpting and clean expression of elements associated with northwest modernist design. A combination of solid planes, punched windows and large glazed areas provide visual interest, and mitigates the scale of the tower. The extensive balcony areas support the design’s sustainability initiatives with deep overhangs offering effective shade, whereas the solid punched facades

of the east and west provide increased thermal value. The east and west facades create a solid mass on each side which wraps the north and south facade corners while the middle portion of the south facade give way to a lighter glass expression breaking up the south massing into tall slender vertical form—thereby minimizing the scale and bulk of the tower. The balanced alternating rhythm of the punched window patterning found on the east and west facade recalls the organic perforation that would occur to the exterior paneling of a sawmill beehive burner. At night, the pattern on the tower becomes visible throughout the River District—providing a variegated glow that resembles a beehive burner burning at night. Lastly, the maximized glazed areas of the north and south facade also provide generous access to daylight and views.

Podium

The podium’s overall simple form and clean expression draws visual interest down Sawmill Crescent. With the tower set back from the street wall, the 4-storey cantilevered podium massing provides a visual connection from the entrance of the River District to the west, along Sawmill Crescent, to the Town Square Centre to the east. The podium massing form defines the strong streetwall and its unique detailing and layered expression differentiate it from the rest of the building. Perforated thin vertical fins, with hidden connections, span the 4-storeys creating an engaging rhythm that also adds privacy to the residential units.

Townhouses

With contrasting large punched glazed openings, in solid wall planes, and clearly defined outdoor spaces the townhouse design, like that of the tower, reflects the simple geometry of northwest modernism. Located towards the south along the Kent Avenue Greenway, Townhouses are elevated from the sidewalk—a result of the falling grade and the minimum building elevation established by the flood plain. Private terraces at ground level face the south overlooking the greenway. Concrete landscape and projecting entrance walls and canopies increase privacy between units. Units have direct access to the 2nd storey amenity courtyard and also contain a private 4th storey landscaped roof terrace. Furthermore, each unit has direct access to private parking from within their unit.

Balconies

Balcony sizes are maximized to improve solar shading, and to enhance the livability and usability of private outdoor space. The largest balconies, located on the tower’s south

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facade, protrude from the tower to maximize solar protection for the mostly glazed facade. The largest balcony on the southeast corner of the tower has a slight angle to add visual interest when viewing the development from the south. The east and west facing balconies on the tower are recessed and joined together to create a single balcony expression. To optimize views to the east and west for the residents, these balconies puncture through the facade sticking out from the tower creating a large vertical slit on both facades. The edge of the balcony has an upstand that adds a feeling of privacy and comfort, and continues the horizontal banding of the exterior paneling.

CHARACTER/LIVE-WORK

The live/work units establish a strong street wall base that contains a two storey expression aligning to the adjacent commercial spaces along Sawmill Crescent. Private outdoor spaces with recessed wood entries and canopies define the at-grade private entrances. Tall plants in a bioswale arcing along Sawmill Crescent (within the buildings setback) enhance street vitality, provide access to nature and promote a fine balance between privacy for the units and the impression of transparency and welcomed access for the public to these businesses.

MATERIALS + COLORS

Parcel 16.2's expression captures a refreshed modern approach to urban living by limiting the use of materials, colour and texture to a small palette of finishes, and by being sensitive to the surrounding developments. The high quality durable building material palette will include: off-white cement fiber paneling with exposed fasteners on the exterior, a punched aluminum window systems, wood paneling at soffit entries on the ground level, metal railing system along townhouse terraces, metal perforated paneling and structural shapes for residential entrances, board formed concrete walls along the greenway, and painted concrete. Furthermore, landscaping and lighting play integral roles in the formal expression in particular at the streetwall. The final creation of the overall colour palette of the design is soft with light colouring, except for the contrasting materials at entrances and architectural features, that highlight their importance.

LANDSCAPE

The site's history and proximity to the water will be celebrated through the use of water features including a pond, bridge, and waterfall. The cascading water feature provides year-round pedestrian interest and a visual connection to the raised 2nd storey courtyard. Patinaed

fluted V-rollers that currently exist on the site will be integrated into the landscape design. High quality paving will be used in all areas of the project and metal sculptural elements are proposed to reference the River District's rich industrial heritage. In keeping with sustainability initiatives of the EFL neighbourhood, green roofs will be featured on the private units and at inaccessible areas. Storm water will be collected on site and used for irrigation. Along Sawmill Crescent a bioswale with tall planting will run along the live-work entrances tying into the storm water management and waterfall feature. Unique bridges will span over the bioswale for the main residential and live/work entrances allowing for a gentle transition from public to private space. At the corner of Road "A" and Sawmill Crescent, next to the residential entrance, there is ample opportunity for public art. Outdoor amenities within the 2nd storey courtyard reinforce the family-oriented community for this development by way of a rich tree canopied informal children's play area, seating areas, informal lawn areas, and a water feature. Additional amenity spaces are located on the 3rd storey that opens to the shared mews on the east end of the property. A large gym, fitness room, multi-purpose spaces, and lounges look out onto the courtyard to the west, and provide access to an outside terrace with a hot tub to the east. A 7th storey amenity spills out to the podium roof which accommodates a variety of uses in an experientially rich and aesthetically pleasing common space. The podium roof will be shared with the private roof terraces of the units below and each area will be separated with low fencing and or planting. The green-planted edge of the podium roof will also create strong visual interest when viewed from below. The bioswale that runs along Sawmill Crescent wraps the building on the east making its way down the shared mews creating a more inviting and welcoming space. At the end of the mews the public bike share is surrounded by walls of upward growing vines. A variety of plants have been selected to provide interest throughout the year and to serve a wide range of functions such as screening and division between private residences. All plants have been chosen for their exemplary characteristics such as form, texture, flowers or fall colour. In general, plants selected are native or "low resource" adaptable plants requiring minimal irrigation or fertilizers once established, and blend with the River District neighbourhood.