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City of Vancouver  
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Attention: **Jennifer Catarino**  
**Project Facilitator**  
[Jennifer.Catarino@vancouver.ca](mailto:Jennifer.Catarino@vancouver.ca)

Dear Jennifer,

Re: **REZONING: 1444 ALBERNI STREET AND 740 NICOLA STREET**  
**DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATION**  
**OUR PROJECT NUMBER: 216012**

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## DEVELOPMENT PERMIT DESIGN BRIEF

### Architecture and Urban Design

We see the Alberni towers as an opportunity to bring the best possible high-rise residential urbanism to Vancouver’s West End. Our proposal will not only enhance this neighborhood at the scale of the pedestrian but will also be a welcome addition to the Vancouver skyline. Historically, Vancouver’s West End has been a residential area, so one of our primary goals is to design a building with a residential feel and character. The last thirty years of construction in Vancouver has witnessed the rise of a thicket of glass towers. However, it is important to remember that for 100 years before then, almost all buildings, including residential buildings, in Vancouver were masonry structures with “punched” windows. This 150 years of architectural history in Vancouver is equally important if not more important than the 30 year glass period. We believe the Alberni buildings are an excellent opportunity for the West End to connect to this long tradition of masonry residential buildings in Vancouver.

New buildings in an urban context have a civic responsibility to enhance existing neighborhoods with better urbanism than what currently exists. Our building’s pedestrian scaled podium will anchor the building complex to the street by defining street edges in the way of traditional space-defining urbanism, and will also act as a transition between the street scale and the tower scale. Furthermore, by incorporating an array of sculptural details in the stonework a variety of windows door types and garden fences, the building base will enrich the pedestrian visual experience on the street. A nicely scaled courtyard garden is proposed along Alberni Street to break the scale of the base into three smaller building-like elements, as it leads to the building’s main door. Flanking the building’s entry garden along the podium, a series of private residential entrances will line Alberni Street, providing a townhouse like rhythm for the pedestrian and a visual dialogue with the surrounding buildings that feature townhouses at their bases.

The towers are off set from each other, and one is a slightly lower than the other, creating a dynamic composition. This gesture also means that Alberni Street and the parallel lane will each get one prominent tower that aligns with the base and another that sets back, providing variety in scale. The formal framework of the tower facades are windows on a masonry building as figures on a field that can be changed to express the rooms inside, or grouped together in various ways to create mid-scaled gestures. This kind of variety is particular to residential buildings and expressing it helps to creating a residential character. At a larger scale, each of the two towers are divided into 3 sections: mid-rise, shaft, and crown. The lower 12 floors, the mid-rise, are treated with window and balcony types configured to create a strong figural mid-scale transition between the base and the full height of the towers. This mid-scale element is reminiscent of the height of Vancouver's towers from the 1920s and 1930s, a scale that we believe should be referenced as the city grows. Above that, the shaft facades are vertically detailed with projecting bay windows and corner setback cutouts, adding vertically and sculptural interest to the towers. The crowns echo the scale of the bases with sculpted set-back terraces that bring the greenery of the city to the skyline while creating residentially scaled pavilions to be enjoyed both from the street and from great distances. Each of these elements on the towers are individually detailed to clarify the composition, but united they form a cohesive composition that complements the Vancouver skyline and invigorates the street.

### **Landscape**

The materiality and architectural language of the project extends to detailing of the townhouses and entry courtyard by means of low walls, stone piers and metal fences. To this structure, a rich planting palette has been developed to express a garden-like richness suitable to both the project and the neighbourhood's long standing residential character of robust and mixed shrub and perennial plantings composed informally within formal green borders. A cadence of townhouse entries and small gardens and second row of trees frames the focal entry courtyard on Alberni Street. The entry court itself echoes many of the neighbourhoods original apartment buildings through its courtyard furnished with seating and bike parking and framed with layered shade-tolerant plantings and feature trees.

The same thoughtful integration of the project through its landscape expression is carried out on all sides and up atop the podium. Layered plantings and terrace walls line the Broughton side, with Triangle West streetscape treatments anticipated. An enhanced landscape expression of Eihu Lane will contribute to the pedestrian expression of the project, responding to the massing of the podium and creating an attractive streetscape through planted bulges and pedestrian paving, plantings and landscape walls along daycare and residential amenity interfaces along a centre swale drained laneway. The project welcomes the anticipated city-led development of the Nicola Street Parklet as a final component of full integration within the neighbourhood. Green edges are given to the expression of the podium, as well as several of its intervening edges. The top of the podium is fully dedicated to daycare and residential amenity uses within this green frame, including provisions for edible landscaping and attention to bird-friendly guidelines.

We believe the principles for creating successful high-rise residential urbanism in a city involve designing a building or complex that improves the context of the site, enhances the skyline of the city, provides a pedestrian friendly scale at street level, and is residential in character. Our design for the Alberni site, with its pedestrian scaled podium, integrated tower compositions, and masonry walls that connect to the broad history of the city's architecture is an effective example of how to meet these principles of high rise residential urbanism, and which this building complex is an ideally suited addition to the urban fabric of Vancouver. As Vancouver's first residential Passive House high rise, it is completely of its time.

Yours truly

**MUSSON CATTELL MACKEY PARTNERSHIP  
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