

July 04, 2017

City of Vancouver - Planning and Development Services
City Hall - East Wing, 2675 Yukon St.
Vancouver, BC

Attn: **Project Coordinator**
Re.: **239 Keefer Street – Design Rationale Mixed Use DE**

Please accept this design rationale and explanation of the new development proposed for 239 Keefer Street. The proposed building replaces an existing single-storey vacant structure and is a mid-block 50' wide site fronting Keefer Street and accessed by a 6m rear lane. The property is flanked by a single-storey retail use to the east and a three-storey retail/ office building to the west.

Design Rationale

The challenges of development in Chinatown have been increasingly evident, and community sensitivities towards development formed the primary driver to the approach of this site renewal project. Issues of scale and how development can be undertaken in a sensitive and inclusive way are paramount, and developing a smaller site with a reduced density is a valid starting point. A design language has been developed that looks to the existing architectural stock and fabric of Chinatown, incorporating precedents of materiality and existing design language without being merely derivative. We feel this is a successful resolution to a delicate balance between historical reference and contemporary presence. The street frontage is designed with the intention of collaborating with the adjacent streetscape and wider Chinatown aesthetic.

This proposal has been developed to comply with the Technical Summary and requirements currently being finalized by the city, and responds to the variety of concerns that have been raised with respect to sensitivities toward density, scale, housing and respecting the architectural context.

Providing a variety of housing stock forms part of the approach, with the sizing of the units provided ranging from affordable studio and one-bedroom units to larger family units in line with both city guidelines and the requirements of this demographically diverse area of the city.

A variety of open-air and covered amenity, residential and commercial spaces are provided to enhance livability and commercial viability. The Landscape design has been developed to complement and enhance the building design,

The goal of developing smaller sites presents significant spatial challenges for vehicle loading and parking needs. Requirements for these are satisfied through direct lane access, incorporating two levels of underground parking accessed by a vehicle elevator. These spatial restrictions necessitate the provision of a single Class B loading stall, and inclusion of a car-share vehicle to satisfy Part 4 parking requirements.

The landscape design consists of a series of vertically layered garden vignettes each making reference to the near by Dr Sun Yat Sen Chinese garden. Specific garden

elements are re-interpreted with a contemporary twist and are combined to create specific outdoor rooms each with differing function in mind.

At the ground floor, a dark pigment dyed paving off sets the lighter tonal massing of the Architectural composition. A subtle stamped effect to the concrete paving is applied making a direct reference to the patterns of pebble paving found throughout the Dr Sun Yat Sen garden. Contemporary red hooped cycle racks make a playful reference to modern China while functionally providing our 6 class B parking spaces.

On the second floor a generous amenity terrace provides outdoor space for office workers. A row of shade tolerant black bamboo planting proves a living curtain screen to the laneway. Large format untreated cedar bench seats take design cues from the wooden walkways of the Sun Yat Sen and a contemporary take on the abstracted mountain forms placed throughout the historic garden are reinterpreted as informal play objects placed with-in recycled glass paved islands. Lighting the double height space are a series of suspended lantern like globes.

At the 4th floor a secret walled communal bamboo garden separates two adjacent private patio spaces. The passive garden space is accessed via a modern fritted glass 'Moon Door' with sawn topped basalt columns providing informal seating opportunity for quiet contemplation.

The level seven roof garden & terrace plays off the garden themes explored in the lower floors. Communal play & urban agriculture components are combined in a contemporary composition of island and mountain spaces referencing the historic approach to the design of the Sun Yat Sen Garden. Pinus contorta Contorta trees are proposed as a hat tip to those found throughout the historic garden and are intended to provide year round interest and important song bird habitat. Fritted glass screening separates the communal and private terrace space while overhead, a playful lantern pergola is proposed enlivening the space for evening activity. Informal internally illuminated fibreglass play rocks are intended as a light hearted take on the abstracted mountain forms explored in lower floors while communal tables are placed to maximize views over the street activity below. The 7th and 8th floor terraces are intended as active, shared communal amenity spaces providing opportunity for food gardening, play and socialization. Through the second to the 9th floor private patios and the roof terrace vertically vined metal trellis work provides scented planting with the intention of encouraging urban pollinator species and privacy screening between neighbours.

We feel this proposal is a successful balancing of needs and challenges in Chinatown, and will help to revitalize the conversation and approach to the future of this dynamic and diverse neighbourhood.

Regards,


Christopher P. Gowing Architect—AIBC, OAA, AAA, RAIC, LEED AP
Principal